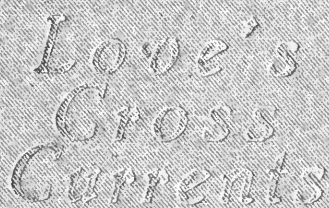

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SWINBURNE

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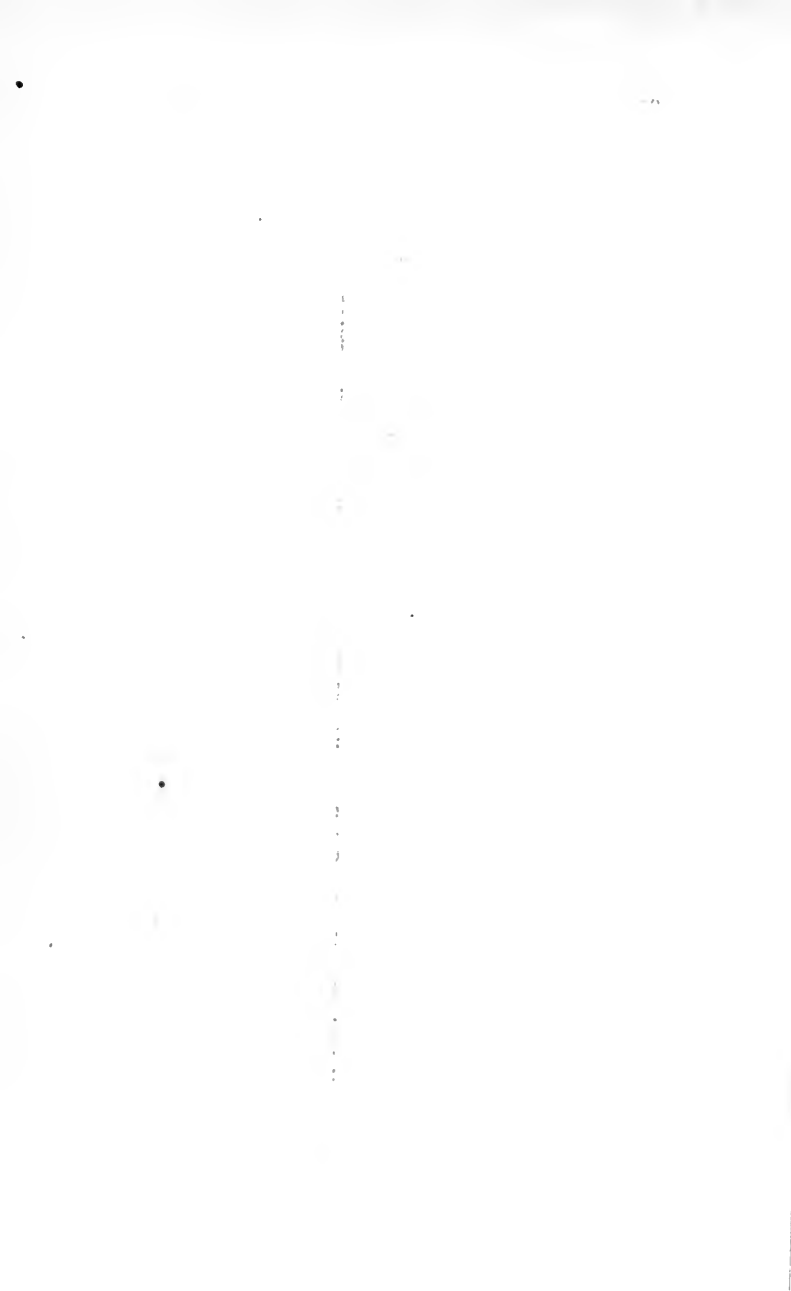

Love's Cross-currents

A Year's Letters

By

Algernon Charles Swinburne

New York and London
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1905

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TO THEODORE WATTS-DUNTON

As it has pleased you to disinter this buried bantling of your friend's literary youth, and to find it worth resurrection, I must inscribe it to you as the person responsible for its revival. Were it not that a friend's judgment may always seem liable to be coloured by the unconscious influence of friendship, I should be reassured as to its deserts by the approval of a master from whose verdict on a stranger's attempt in the creative art of fiction there could be no reasonable appeal—and who, I feel bound to acknowledge with gratitude and satisfaction, has honoured it by the sponsorial suggestion of a new and a happier name. As it is, I can only hope that you may not be for once mistaken in your favourable opinion of a study thrown into the old epistolary form which even the giant genius of Balzac could not restore to the favour it enjoyed in the days of Richardson and of Laclos. However that may be, I am content to know that you agree with me in thinking

that in the world of literary creation there is a legitimate place for that apparent compromise between a story and a play by which the alternate agents and patients of the tale are made to express what befalls them by word of mouth or of pen. I do not forget that the king of men to whose hand we owe the glorious history of Redgauntlet began it in epistolary form, and changed the fashion of his tale to direct and forthright narrative when the story became too strong for him, and would no longer be confined within the limits of conceivable correspondence: but his was in its ultimate upshot a historic and heroic story. And I have always regretted that we have but one specimen of the uncompleted series of letters out of which an earlier novel, the admirable Fortunes of Nigel, had grown up into immortality. The single sample which Lockhart saw fit to vouchsafe us is so great a masterpiece of dramatic humour and living imagination that the remainder of a fragment which might well suffice for the fame of any lesser man ought surely to have been long since made public. We could not dispense with the doubtless more generally amusing and interesting narrative which superseded it: but the true and thankful and understanding lover of Scott must and will readily allow or affirm that there are signs of even rarer and finer genius in the cancelled fragment of the rejected study. But these

are perhaps too high and serious matters to be touched upon in a note of acknowledgment prefixed to so early an attempt in the great art of fiction or creation that it would never have revisited the light or rather the twilight of publicity under honest and legitimate auspices, if it had not found in you a sponsor and a friend.

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Love's Cross-currents

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PROLOGUE

I

In the spring of 1849, old Lord Cheyne, the noted philanthropist, was, it will be remembered by all those interested in social reform, still alive and energetic. Indeed, he had some nine years of active life before him —public baths, institutes, reading-rooms, schools, lecture-halls, all manner of improvements, were yet to bear witness to his ardour in the cause of humanity. The equable eye of philosophy has long since observed that the appetite of doing good, unlike those baser appetites which time effaces and enjoyment allays, gains in depth and vigour with advancing years—a cheering truth, attested alike by the life and death of this excellent man. Reciprocal amelioration, he was wont to say,

was the aim of every acquaintance he made—of every act of benevolence he allowed himself. Religion alone was wanting to complete a character almost painfully perfect. The mutual moral friction of benefits bestowed and blessings received had, as it were, rubbed off the edge of those qualities which go to make up the religious sentiment. The spiritual cuticle of this truly good man was so hardened by the incessant titillations of charity, and of that complacency with which virtuous people look back on days well spent, that the contemplative emotions of faith and piety had no effect on it; no stimulants of doctrine or provocatives of devotion could excite his fancy or his faith—at least, no clearer reason than this has yet been assigned in explanation of a fact so lamentable.

His son Edmund, the late lord, was nineteen at the above date. Educated in the lap of philanthropy, suckled at the breasts of all the virtues in turn, he was even then the worthy associate of his father in all schemes of improvement; only, in the younger man, this inherited appetite for goodness took a somewhat singular turn. Mr. Cheyne was a Socialist—a Democrat of the most advanced kind. The father was quite happy in the construction of a model cottage; the son was busied with

plans for the equalization of society. The wrongs of women gave him many a sleepless night; their cause excited in him an interest all the more commendable when we consider that he never enjoyed their company in the least, and was, in fact, rather obnoxious to them than otherwise. The fact of this mutual repulsion had nothing to do with philanthropy. It was undeniable; but, on the other hand, the moral-sublime of this young man's character was something incredible. Unlike his father, he was much worried by religious speculations—certain phases of belief and disbelief he saw fit to embody in a series of sonnets, which were privately printed under the title of "Aspirations, by a Wayfarer." Very flabby sonnets they were, leaving in the mouth a taste of chaff and dust; but the genuine stamp of a sincere and single mind was visible throughout; which was no small comfort.

The wife of Lord Cheyne, not unnaturally, had died in giving birth to such a meritorious portent. Malignant persons, incapable of appreciating the moral-sublime, said that she died of a plethora of conjugal virtue on the part of her husband. It is certain that less sublime samples of humanity did find the society of Lord Cheyne a grievous infliction. Reform, emancipation, manure, the right of voting, the national

burden, the adulteration of food, mechanics, farming, sewerage, beet-root sugar, and the loftiest morality, formed each in turn the staple of that excellent man's discourse. If an exhausted visitor sought refuge in the son's society, Mr. Cheyne would hold forth by the hour on divorce, Church questions, pantheism, socialism (Christian or simple), the equilibrium of society, the duties of each class, the mission of man, the balance of ranks, education, development, the stages of faith, the meaning of the age, the relation of parties, the regeneration of the priesthood, the reformation of criminals, and the destiny of woman. Had fate or date allowed it,—but stern chronology forbade,—he would assuredly have figured as president, as member, or at least as correspondent of the Society for the Suppression of Anatomy, the Society for the Suppression of Sex, or the Ladies' Society for the Propagation of Contagious Disease (Unlimited). But these remarkable associations, with all their potential benefits to be conferred on purblind and perverse humanity, were as yet unprofitably dormant in the sluggish womb of time. Nevertheless, the house decidedly might have been livelier than it was.

Not that virtue wanted its reward. Lord Cheyne was in daily correspondence with some dozen of societies for the propagation and sup-

pression of Heaven knows what; Professor Swallow, Dr. Chubbins, and Mr. Jonathan Bloman were among his friends. His son enjoyed the intimacy of M. Adrien Laboissière, secretary of the committee of a minor democratic society; and Mdlle. Clémence de Massigny, the too-celebrated authoress of "Rosine et Rosette," "Confidences d'un Fauteuil," and other dangerous books, had, when in the full glow of her brief political career, written to the young son of pale and brumous Albion, "pays des libertés tronquées et des passions châtrées," an epistle of some twenty pages, in which she desired him, not once or twice, to kiss the paper where she had left a kiss for him—"baiser chaste et frémissant," she averred, "étreinte altière et douce de l'esprit dégagé des pièges hideux de la matière, témoin et sceau d'un amour idéal." "O poëte!" she exclaimed elsewhere, "versons sur cette triste humanité la rosée rafraîchissante de nos pleurs; mêlons sur nos lèvres le soupir qui console au sourire qui rayonne. Chaque larme qui tombe peut rouler dans une plaie qu'elle soulagera. Les voluptés âcres et sévères de l'attendrissement valent bien le plaisir orageux des sens allumés." All this was astonishing, but satisfactory to the recipient, and worth at least any two of his father's letters. Chubbins, Bloman, and the rest, practical men enough in their

way, held in some contempt the infinite and the ideal, and were incapable of appreciating the absolute republic and the forces of the future.

The arid virtue of the two chiefs was not common to the whole of the family. Mr. John Cheyne, younger brother to the noted philanthropist, had lived at a great rate for years; born in the regency period, he had grasped the receding skirt of its fashions; he had made friends with his time, and sucked his orange to some purpose before he came to the rind. He married well, not before it was high time; his finances, inherited from his mother, and originally not bad for a younger son, were shaken to the last screw that kept both ends together; he was turned of forty, and his wife had a decent fortune: she was a Miss Banks, rather handsome, sharp and quick in a good-natured way. She brought him a daughter in 1836, and a son in 1840; then, feeling, no doubt, that she had done all that could be looked for from a model wife, completed her good work by dying in 1841. John Cheyne consoled himself with the reflection that she might have done worse; his own niece, the wife of a neighbour and friend, had eloped the year before, leaving a boy of two on her husband's hands. For the reasons of this we must go some way back and bring up a fresh set of characters, so as to get things clear at starting.

Prologue

A reference to the Peerage will give us, third on the Cheyne family list of a past generation, the name of "Helena, born 1800, married in 1819 Sir Thomas Midhurst, Bart., by whom (deceased) she had one daughter, Amicia, born 1820, married in May, 1837, to Captain Philip Harewood, by whom she had issue Reginald-Edward, born April 7, 1838. This marriage was dissolved in 1840 by Act of Parliament." And we may add, Mrs. Harewood was married in the same year to Frederick Stanford, Esq., of Ashton Hildred, co. Bucks, to whom, in 1841, she presented a daughter, named after herself at the father's desire, who in 1859 married the late Lord Cheyne, just ten months after his father's lamented decease. Lady Midhurst, then already widowed, took up her daughter's cause energetically at the time of the divorce. Her first son-in-law was her favourite abhorrence; with her second she had always been on the best of terms, residing, indeed, now for many years past with him and his wife, an honoured inmate for the term of her natural life, and in a quiet though effectual way mistress of the whole household. It was appalling to hear her hold forth on the topic of the unhappy Captain Harewood. She had known him intimately before he married her daughter; at that time he thought fit to be delightful. After the marriage he unmasked at

once, and became detestable. (Fan and foot, clapping down together, used to keep time to this keen-voiced declaration.) He had used his wife dreadfully; at this day his treatment of the poor boy left in his hands was horrible, disgraceful for its stupidity and cruelty—such a nice little fellow the child was, too, not the least like him, but the image of his mother and of her (Lady Midhurst), which of course was reason enough for that ruffian to ill-use his own son. There was one comfort, she had leave to write to the boy, and go now and then to see him; and she took care to encourage him in his revolt against his father's style of training. In effect, as far as she could, Lady Midhurst tried to instil into her grandson her own views of his father's character; it was not difficult, seeing that father and son were utterly unlike and discordant. Old Lord Cheyne (who took decidedly the Harewood side, and used sometimes to have the boy over to Lidcombe, where he revelled about the stables all day long) once remonstrated with his sister on this course of tactics. "My dear Cheyne," she replied, in quite a surprised voice, "you forget Captain Harewood's estate is entailed." He was an ex-captain; his elder brother had died before he paid court to Miss Midhurst, and, when he married, the captain had land to settle on. As a younger brother,

Lady Midhurst had liked him extremely; as a man of marriageable income, she gave him her daughter, and fell at once to hating him.

Capricious or not, she was a beautiful old woman to look at; something like her brother John, who had been one of the handsomest men of his day; her daughter and granddaughter, both women of singular beauty and personal grace, inherited their looks and carriage from her. Clear-skinned, with pure regular features, and abundant bright white hair (it turned suddenly some ten years after this date, in the sixtieth of her age), she was a study for old ladies. People liked to hear her talk; she was not unwilling to gratify them. At one time of her life, she had been known to say, her tongue got her into some trouble, and her style of sarcasm involved her in various unpleasant little differences and difficulties. All that was ever said against her she managed somehow to outlive, and at fifty and upwards she was generally popular, except, indeed, with religious and philanthropic persons. These, with the natural instinct of race, smelt out at once an enemy in her. At sight of her acute attentive smile and reserved eyes a curate would become hot and incoherent, finally dumb; a lecturer nervous, and voluble to the last.

II

THE two children of Mr. John Cheyne enjoyed somewhat less of their aunt's acquaintance and care than did her grandchildren, or even her other nephew, Lord Cheyne's politico-philanthropic son and successor. They were brought up in the quietest way possible; Clara with a governess, who took her well in hand at an early age, and kept her apart from all influence but her own; Frank under the lazy kind incurious eyes of his father, who coaxed him into a little shaky Latin at his spare hours, with a dim vision before him of Eton as soon as the boy should be fit. Lord Cheyne now and then exchanged visits with his brother, but not often; and the children not unnaturally were quite incapable of appreciating the earnest single-minded philanthropy of the excellent man—their father hardly relished it more than they did. But there was one man, or boy, whom John Cheyne held in deeper and sincerer abhorrence than he did his brother; and this was his brother's son. Mr. Cheyne called between whiles at his uncle's, but

was hardly received with a decent welcome. A clearer-sighted or more speculative man than John Cheyne would have scented a nascent inclination on his nephew's part towards his daughter. There was a sort of weakly weary gentleness of manner in the young philanthropist which the girl soon began to appreciate. Clara showed early enough a certain acuteness, and a relish of older company, which gave promise of some practical ability. At thirteen she had good ideas of management, and was a match for her father in most things. But she could not make him tolerate his nephew; she could only turn his antipathy to profit by letting it throw forward into relief her own childish friendliness. There was the composition of a good intriguer in the girl from the first; she had a desirable power of making all that could be made out of every chance of enjoyment. She was never one to let the present slip. Few children have such a keen sense as she how infinitely preferable is the smallest limping skinny half-moulted sparrow in the hand to the fattest ortolan in the bush. She was handsome too, darker than her father's family; her brother had more of the Cheyne points about him. Frank was not a bad sort of boy, quiet, idle, somewhat excitable and changeable, with a good deal of floating affection in him, and a fund of respect

for his sister. Lady Midhurst, after one of her visits (exploring cruises in search of character, she called them), set him down in a decisive way as "flat, *fade*, wanting in spice and salt; the sort of boy always to do decently well under any circumstances, to get creditably through any work he might have to do; a fellow who would never tumble because he never jumped; well enough disposed, no doubt, and not a milksop exactly—certain to get on comfortably with most people, if there were not more of his father latent in the boy than she saw yet; whereas, if he really had inherited anything of her brother John's headstrong irresolute nature, she was sure he had no strong qualities to counterbalance or modify it."

Lady Midhurst rather piqued herself on this exhaustive elaborate style of summary; and had, indeed, a good share of insight and analytic ability. Her character of Frank was mainly unfair; but that quality of "always doing well enough under any circumstances" the boy really had in some degree: a rather valuable quality too. His aunt would have admitted the value of it at once; but he was not her sort, she would have added; she liked people who made their own scrapes for themselves before they fell into them, and then got out without being fished for. Frank would get into trouble sometimes,

no doubt, but he would just slip in. Now it was always better to fall than to slip. You got less dirty, and were less time about it; besides, an honest tumble was less likely to give you a bad sprain. This philosophic lady had a deep belief in the discipline of circumstances, and was disposed to be somewhat more than lenient towards any one passing (not unsoiled) through his time of probation and training. Personally, at this time, Frank was a fair, rather short boy, with light hair and grey eyes, usually peaceable and amiable in his behaviour; his sister, tall, brown, thin, with clear features, and something of an abrupt decisive air about her. They had few friends, and saw little company; Captain Harewood, who in former days had been rather an intimate of John Cheyne's, hardly ever now rode over to see his ex-friend; not that he had any quarrel with the uncle of his divorced wife, but he now scarcely ever stirred out or sought any company beyond a few professional men of his own stamp and a clergyman or two, having lately taken up with a rather acrid and dolorous kind of religion. Lady Midhurst, one regrets to say, asserted that her enemy made a mere pretence of austerity in principle, and spent his time, under cover of seclusion, in the voluptuous pastime of torturing his unlucky boy and all his miserable subordinates. "The man was always

one of those horrid people who cannot live without giving pain; she remembered he was famous for cruelty in his profession, and certainly he had always been the most naturally cruel and spiteful man she ever knew; she had not an atom of doubt he really had some physical pleasure in the idea of others' sufferings; that was the only way to explain the whole course of his life and conduct." Once launched on the philosophy of this subject, Lady Midhurst went on to quote instances of a like taste from history and tradition. As to the unfortunate Captain Harewood, nothing could be falser than such an imputation; he was merely a grave, dry, shy, soured man, severe and sincere in his sorrowful distaste for company. Perhaps he did enjoy his own severity and moroseness, and had some occult pleasure in the sense that his son was being trained up sharply and warily; but did not a boy with such blood in his veins need it?

Thus there was one source of company cut off, for the first years of their life, from the young Cheynes. The only companion they were usually sure of was not much to count on in the way of amusement, being a large, heavy, solitary boy of sixteen or more, a son of their neighbour on the left—Mr. Radworth, of Blocksham. These Radworths were allies of old Lord Cheyne's, who had a great belief in the youth's

genius and promise. He had developed, when quite young, a singular taste and aptitude for science, abstract and mechanical; had carried on this study at school in the teeth of his tutors and in defiance of his school-fellows, keeping well aloof from all other learning and taking little or no rest or relaxation. His knowledge and working power were wonderful; but he was a slow, unlovely, weighty, dumb, grim sort of fellow, and had already overtasked his brain and nerves, besides ruining his eyes. He never went anywhere but to the Cheynes', and there used to pay a dull puzzled homage to the girl, who set very light by him. There was always a strong flavour of the pedant and the *philistin* about Ernest Radworth, which his juniors were of course quick enough to appreciate.

Mr. John Cheyne, though on very fair terms with his sister, did not visit the Stanfords; he had never seen his niece since the time of the divorce; Lady Midhurst was the only member of the household at Ashton Hildred who ever came across to his place. The two children hardly knew the name of their small second cousin, Amicia Stanford; she was a year younger than Frank Cheyne, and the petted pupil of her grandmother. Mrs. Stanford, a gentle handsome woman, placid and rather shy in her manner, gave the child up wholly to the elder

lady's care, and spent her days chiefly in a soft sleepy kind of housekeeping. A moral observer would have deplored the evident quiet happiness of her life. She never thought at all about her first husband, or the three years of her life which Lady Midhurst used to call her pre-Stanford period, except on those occasions when her mother broke out with some fierce reference to Captain Harewood, or some angry expression of fondness for his son. Then Mrs. Stanford would cry a little, in a dispassionate graceful manner; no doubt she felt at times some bitter tender desire and regret towards the first of her children, gave way between whiles to some unprofitable memory of him, small sorrows that had not heart enough in them to last long. At one time, perhaps, she had wept away all the tears she had in her; one may doubt if there ever had been a great store of them for grief to draw upon. She was of a delicate impressible nature, but not fashioned so as to suffer sharply for long together. If there came any sorrow in her way she dropped down (so to speak) at the feet of it, and bathed them in tears till it took pity on her tender beauty and passed by on the other side without doing her much harm. She was quite unheroic and rather unmaternal, but pleasantly and happily put together, kind, amiable, and very beautiful; and as fond as she could ever

be, not only of herself, but also of her husband, her mother, and her daughter. The husband was a good sort of man, always deep in love of his wife and admiration of her mother; never conspicuous for any event in his life but that elopement; and how matters even then had come to a crisis between two such lovers as they were, probably only one person on earth could have told; and this third person certainly was not the bereaved captain. The daughter was from her birth of that rare and singular beauty which never changes for the worse in growing older. She was one of the few girls who have no ugly time. In this spring of 1849 she was the most perfect child of eight that can be imagined. There was a strange grave beauty and faultless grace about her, more noticeable than the more usual points of childish prettiness: pureness of feature, ample brilliant hair, perfect little lips, serious and rounded in shape, and wonderful unripe beauty of chin and throat. Her grandmother, who was fond of French phrases when excited or especially affectionate (a trick derived from recollections of her own French mother and early friends among French relatives—she had a way of saying, "*Hein?*" and glancing up or sideways with an eye at once birdlike and feline), asserted that "Amy was faite à peindre—faite à croquer—faite à manger

de baisers." The old life-worn philosophic lady seemed absolutely to riot and revel in her fondness for the child. There was always a certain amiably cynical side to her affections, which showed itself by and by in the girl's training; but the delight and love aroused in her at the sight of her pupil were as true and tender as such emotions could be in such a woman. Lady Midhurst was really very much fonder of her two grandchildren than of any one else alive. Redgie was just her sort of boy, she said, and Amy just her sort of girl. It would have been delicious to bring them up together (education, superintendence, training of character, guidance of habit, in young people, were passions with the excellent lady); and if the boy's father would just be good enough to come to some timely end—. She had been godmother to both children, and both were as fond of her as possible. "*Enfin!*" she said, hopelessly.

III

They were to have enough to do with each other in later life, these three scattered households of kinsfolk; but the mixing process only began on a late spring day of 1849, at the country house which Mr. John Cheyne had inherited from his wife. This was a little old house, beautifully set in among orchards and meadows, with abundance of roses now all round it, under the heavy leaves of a spring that June was fast gaining upon. A wide soft river divided the marsh meadows in front of it, full of yellow flag-flowers and moist fen-blossom. Behind, there slanted upwards a small broken range of hills, the bare green windy lawns of them dry and fresh under foot, thick all the way with cowslips at the right time. It was a splendid place for children; better perhaps than Ashton Hildred with its huge old brick-walled gardens and wonderful fruit-trees blackened and dotted with lumps or patches of fabulous overgrown moss, and wild pleasure-grounds stifled with beautiful rank grass; better decidedly than Lord Cheyne's

big brilliant Lidcombe, in spite of royal shooting-grounds and the admirable slopes of high bright hill-country behind it, green sweet miles of park and embayed lake, beyond praise for riding and boating; better incomparably than Captain Harewood's place, muffled in woods, with a grim sad beauty of its own, but seemingly knee-deep in sere leaves all the year round, wet and weedy and dark and deep down, kept hold of somehow by autumn in the midst of spring; only the upper half of it clear out of the clutch of winter even in the hottest height of August weather, with a bitter flavour of frost and rain in it all through summer. It was wonderful, Lady Midhurst said, how any child could live there without going mad or moping. She was thankful the boy went to school so young, though no doubt his father had picked out the very hardest sort of school that he decently could select. Anything was better than that horrid wet hole of a place, up to the nose and eyes in black damp woods, and with thick moist copses of alder and birch-trees growing against the very windows; and such a set of people inside of it! She used to call there about three times a year, during the boy's holidays; get him apart from his father and tutor, and give him presents and advice and pity and encouragement of all sorts, mixed with histories of his mother and half-sister, the whole

spiced not sparingly with bitter allusions to his father, to which one may fear there was some response now and then on the boy's part.

It was after one of these visits that Captain Harewood first brought his son over to his old friend's. Perhaps he thought at length that the boy might as well see some one about his own age in holiday-time. Reginald was growing visibly mutinous and hard to keep down by preachings and punishments; had begun evidently to wince and kick under the domestic rod. His father and the clerical tutor who came over daily to look after the boy's holiday task could hardly keep him under by frequent flogging and much serious sorrowful lecturing. He was not a specially fast boy, only about as restless and insubordinate as most fellows at his age; but this was far more than his father was prepared to stand. Let him see some one else outside home than Lady Midhurst; it would do him no harm, and the boy was always vicious, and jibbed frightfully, for some days after his grandmother's visits. So before the holidays were out the Captain trotted him over to make friends with Mr. Cheyne's son. The visit was a matter of keen and rather frightened interest to Frank. Clara, on hearing the boy was her junior, made light of it, and was out of the way when Captain Harewood came in with

his son. The two boys eyed each other curiously under close brows and with lips expressive of a grave doubt on either side. The visitor was a splendid-looking fellow, lithe and lightly built, but of a good compact make, with a sunburnt oval face, and hair like unspun yellow silk in colour, but one mass of short rough curls; eyebrows, eyes, and eyelashes all dark, showing quaintly enough against his golden hair and bright pale skin. His mouth, with a rather full red under lip for a child, had a look of such impudent and wilful beauty as to suggest at once the frequent call for birch in such a boy's education. His eyes too had a defiant laugh latent under the lazy light in them. Rather well got-up for the rest and delicately costumed, though with a distinct school stamp on him, but by no means after the muscle-manful type.

This boy had a short whip in one hand, which was of great and visible comfort to him. To switch his leg in a reflective measured way was an action at once impressive in itself and likely to meet and obviate any conversational necessity that might turn up. No smaller boy could accost him lightly while in that attitude.

At last, with a gracious gravity, seeing both elders in low-voiced talk, he vouchsafed five valuable words: "I say, what's your name?" Frank gave his name in with meekness, having

a just sense of his relative insignificance. He was very honest and easy to dazzle.

"Mine's Reginald—Reginald Edward Harewood. It doesn't sound at all well" (this with a sententious suppressed flourish in his voice as of one who blandly deprecates a provoked contradiction)—"no, not at all; because there's such a lot of 'D's' in it. Yours is a much better name. How old are you?"

The abject Frank apologetically suggested "Nine."

"You just look it," said Reginald Harewood, with an awful calm, indicative of a well-grounded contempt for that time of life, restrained for the present by an exquisite sense of social courtesy. "I'm eleven—rising twelve—eleven last month. Suppose we go out?"

IV

Once out in the garden, Reginald became more wonderful than ever. Any one not two years younger, and half a head shorter, must have doubled up with laughter before he had gone three steps. Our friend's patronage of the sunlight, his tolerance of the roses, his gentle thoughtful condescension towards the face of things in general, were too sublime for words.

When they came to the parapet of an old broad terrace, Reginald, still in a dignified way, got astride it, not without a curious grimace and some seeming difficulty in adjusting his small person; tapped his teeth with his whip-handle, and gave Frank for a whole minute the full benefit of his eyes. Frank stood twisting a rose-branch, and looked meek.

The result of Reginald's scrutiny was this question, delivered with much solemn effect.

"I say. Were you ever swished?"

"Swished?" said Frank, with a rapid heat in his cheeks.

"Swished," said Reginald, in his decided voice. "Birched."

"Do you mean flogged?"

Frank asked this very diffidently, and as if the query singed his lips.

"Well, flogged, if you like that better," said Reginald, conscious of a neat point. "Flogged. But I mean a real, right-down swishing, you know. If a fellow says flogged, it may be a whip, don't you see, or a strap. That's caddish. But you can call it flogging, if you like; only not at school, mind. It's all very well before me."

Reverting from these verbal subtleties to the main point, Reginald put the grand query again in a modified shape, but in a tone of courteous resolution, not to be evaded by any boy.

"Does your father often flog you?"

"I never was flogged in my life," said Frank, sensible of his deep degradation.

Reginald, as a boy of the world, could stand a good deal without surprise; experience of men and things had inured him to much that was curious and out of the usual way. But at the shock of this monstrous and incredible assertion he was thrown right off his balance. He got off the parapet, leaned his shoulders against it, and gazed upon the boy, to whom birch was a dim dubious myth, a jocose threat after dinner, with

eyebrows wonderfully high up, and distended eyelids. Then he said,—

"Good—God!" softly, and dividing the syllables with hushed breath.

Goaded to insanity by the big boy's astonishment, agonized by his silence, Frank tenderly put a timid foot in it.

"Were you?" he asked, with much awe.

Then, with straightened shoulders and raised chin, Reginald Harewood took up his parable. Some of his filial expressions must be forgiven to youthful excitement, and for the sake of accuracy; boys, when voluble on a tender point, are awfully accurate in their choice of words. Reginald was very voluble by nature, and easy to excite on this painfully personal matter.

"Ah, yes, I should think so. My good fellow, you ought to have seen me yesterday. I was swished twice in the morning. Can't you see in a man's eyes? My father is — the — most — —awful—Turk. He likes to swish me—he does really. What you'll do when you get to school" (here a pause), "God knows." (This in a pensive and devout manner, touched with pity.) "You'll sing out—by Jove!—won't you sing out the first time you catch it! I used to—I do sometimes now. For it hurts most awfully. But I can stand a good lot of it. My father can always draw blood at the third or fourth cut.

It's just like a swarm of mad bees stinging you at once. At school, if you kick, or if you wince even, or if you make the least bit of row, you get three cuts over. I always did when I was your age. The fellows used to call me all manner of chaffy names. Not the young ones, of course; I should lick them. I say, I wish you were going to school. You'd be letting fellows get you into the most awful rows—ah! wouldn't you? When I was your age I used to get swished twice a week regular. The masters spite me. I know one of them does, because he told one of the big fellows he did. At least he said I was a curse to my division, and I was ruining all the young ones. He did really, on my word. I was the fellow's fag that he said it to, and he called me up that night and licked me with a whip; with a whip like this. He was a most awful bully. I don't think I'll tell you what he did once to a boy. You wouldn't sleep well to-night."

"Oh, do!" said Frank, quivering. The terrific interest of Reginald's confidences suspended his heart at his lips; he beheld the Complete Schoolboy with a breathless reverence. As for pity, he would as soon have ventured to pity a crowned head.

"No," said the boy of the world, shaking considerate curls; "I won't tell a little fellow, I think: it's a shame to go and put them in a

funk. Some fellows are always trying it on, for a spree. I never do. No, my good fellow, you'd better not ask me. You had really."

Reginald sucked his whip-handle with a relish, and eyed the universe in a conscious way.

"Do, please," pleaded the younger. "I don't mind; I've heard of—that is, I've read of—all kinds of awful things. I don't care about them the least bit."

"Well, young one," said Reginald, "don't blame me then, that's all, if you have bad dreams. There was one fellow ran away from school when he heard of it—on my word." And Reginald proceeded to recite certain episodes—apocryphal or canonical—from the life of a lower boy, giving the details with a dreadful unction. No description can express the full fleshy sound of certain words in his mouth. He talked of "*cuts*" with quite a liquorish accent, and gave the technical word "*swish*" with a twang in which the hissing sound of a falling birch became sharply audible. The boy was immeasurably proud of his floggings, and relished the subject of flagellation as few men relish rare wine. As for shame, he had never for a second thought of it. A flogging was an affair of honour to him; if he came off without tears, although with loss of blood, he regarded the master with chivalrous pity, as a brave enemy

worsted. A real tormentor always revelled in the punishment of Reginald. Those who plied the birch with true loving delight in the use of it enjoyed whipping such a boy intensely. Orbilius would have feasted on his flesh—dined off him.

He looked Frank between the eyes as he finished and gave a great shrug.

"I said you'd better not. You look blue and green, upon my honour you do. It's your fault, my good fellow. I'm very sorry. I know some fellows can't stand things. I knew you couldn't by the look of your eyes. I could have taken my oath of it. It isn't in you. It's not your fault; I dare say you've no end of pluck, but you're nervous, don't you see? I don't mean you funk exactly; things disagree with you—that's it."

Here Reginald strangled a discourteous and compromising chuckle, and gave himself a cut with his whip that made his junior wink.

"Ah, now, you see, that makes you wince. Now, look here, you just take hold of that whip and give me a cut as hard as you possibly can. You just do that. I should like it. Do, there's a good fellow. I want to see if you could hurt me. Hit hard, mind. Now then," and he presented a bending broadside to the shot.

The trodden worm turned and stung. Driven

mad by patronage, and all the more savage because of his deep admiration, Frank could not let the chance slip. He took sharp aim, set his teeth, and, swinging all his body round with the force of the blow as he dealt it, brought down the whip on the tightest part he could pick out, with a vicious vigour and stinging skill.

He had a moment's sip of pure honey; Reginald jumped a foot high, and yelled.

But in another minute, before Frank had got his breath again, the boy turned round, rubbing hard with one hand, patted him, and delivered a "Well done!" more stinging than a dozen cuts. Frank succumbed.

"I say, just let me feel your muscle," said Reginald, passing scientific finger-tips up the arm of his companion. "Ah, very good muscle you've got; you ought just to keep it up, you see, and you'll do splendidly. Bend your arm up; so. I'll tell you what now; you ought to make no end of a good hitter in time. But you wouldn't have hurt me a bit if I hadn't come to such grief yesterday. It was a jolly good rod, and quite fresh, with no end of buds on; but you see you can't understand. Of course you can't. Then, you see, there was the ride over here. Riding doesn't usually make me lose leather; but to-day, you know—that is, you don't know. But you will."

Reginald gave a pathetic nod, indicative of untold horrors.

Frank had begun a meek excuse, which was cut short with imperious grace.

"My dear fellow, don't bother yourself. I don't mind. You'll have to learn how to stand a cut before you leave home; or the first time you're sent up, by Jove! how you will squeak! There was a fellow like you last half (Audley his name was), who had never been flogged till he came to school; he was a nice sort of fellow enough, but when they told him to go down—look here, he went in this way." And Reginald proceeded to enact the whole scene, making an inoffensive laurel-bush represent the flagellated novice, whose yells and contortions he rendered with fearful effect, plying his whip vigorously between whiles, till a rain of gashed leaves inundated the gravel, and giving at the same time vocal imitations of the swish of the absent birch-twigs and the voice of the officiating master, as it fulminated words of objurgation and jocose contumely at every other cut. The vivid portraiture of the awful thing and Redgie's subsequent description (too graphic and terrible in its naked realism to be reproduced) of the culprit's subsequent appearance and demeanour, and of his usage at the hands of indignant school-boys, whose sense of propriety his base

behaviour under punishment had outraged in its tenderest part, all this made the youthful hearer's blood shiver deliciously, and his nerves tingle with a tremulous sympathy. He was grateful for this experience, and felt older than five minutes since. Reginald, too, remarking and relishing the impression made, felt kindly towards his junior, and promised, by implication, a continuance of his patronage.

When they went in to luncheon, Redgie examined his friend's sister with the acute eyes of a boy of the world, and evidently approved of her; became, indeed, quite subdued, "lowly and serviceable," on finding that thirteen took a high tone with eleven, and was not prepared to permit advances on an equal footing. Frank, meantime, was scrutinizing under timid eyelids the awful Captain Harewood, in whose hand the eye of his fancy saw, instead of knife and fork, a lifted birch, the twigs worn and frayed, and spotted with filial blood.

Redgie's father was thirty-eight that year, nine years older than his ex-wife, but looking much more. Mrs. Stanford had a fresh equable beauty which might have suited a woman ten years younger. The Captain was a handsome tall man, square in build, with a hard forehead; the black eyes and eyebrows he had bequeathed to his son, but softened; his own eyes were

metallic, and the brows heavy, shaggy even. He had a hard mouth, with large locked lips; a tight chin, a full smooth moustache, and a wide cheek, already furrowed and sad-looking. Something of a despot's justice in the look of him, and something of bitter doubt and regret. His host, a man twelve years older, had worn much better than he had.

When the boys were again by themselves, Redgie was pleased to express his sense of the merits of Frank's sister; a tribute gratefully accepted. Clara was stunning for a girl, her brother added—but was cautious of over-praising her.

"I've got a sister," Reginald stated; "I believe she's a clipper, but I don't know. Oh, I say, isn't my grandmother an aunt of yours or something?"

"Aunt Helena?" said her nephew, who held her in a certain not unfriendly awe.

"That's her," said Redgie, using a grammatical construction which, occurring in a Latin theme, would have brought down birch on his bare skin to a certainty. "Isn't she a brick? I think she's the greatest I know—that's about what she is."

Frank admitted she was kind.

"Kind? I should think she was, too. She's a trump. But do you know she hates my gov-

ernor like mad. They hardly speak when she comes to our crib. Last time she came she gave me a fiver; she did really." (Redgie at that age wanted usually some time to get up his slang in, but when it once began, he was great at it, considering he had never got into a very slang set.) "Well, she says my sister is no end of a good one to look at by this time; but I think yours must be the jolliest. I've known lots of girls" (the implied reticence of accent was, as Lady Midhurst would have said, *impayable*), "but I never saw such a stunner as she is. She makes a fellow feel quite shut up and spooney."

This amorous confidence was brought up short by the sudden advent of the two fathers. Meeting the eye of his, Redgie felt his fate, and tingled with the anticipated smart of it. All his last speech had too clearly dropped word by word into the paternal ear; the wretched boy's face reddened with biting blushes to the very chin and eyelids and hair. When some twenty minutes later they parted at the hall-door, Redgie gave his friend a pitiful private wink and sadly comic shrug, so suggestive of his impending doom and the inevitable ceremony to be gone through when he reached home again that Frank, having seen him ride off quite silently a little behind his father, turned back into the house with his own flesh quivering, and a fearful

vague vision before his eyes of Reginald some hours later twisting his bared limbs under the torture.

He was eager to gather the household verdict on his friend; but Reginald had scarcely made much of a success in other quarters. Clara thought him silly and young of his age (a verdict which would have finished him at once if he had known of it), but admitted he was a handsome boy, much prettier and pleasanter to have near one than Ernest Radworth. Mr. Cheyne was sorry for the boy, but could hardly put up with such a sample of the new race. Redgie's conceit and gracious impudence (though it was not really a case of bad tone, he allowed) had evidently been too much for him. The Captain, too, had expressed uneasiness about his boy, and a sense of vexatious outlooks ahead.

After all there grew up no great intimacy out of this first visit; a mere childish interlude, which seemingly had but just result enough to establish a certain tie at school afterwards between young Cheyne and his second cousin—a tie considerably broken in upon by various squabbles, and strained often almost to snapping; but, for all that, the visit had left its mark on both sides, and had its consequences.

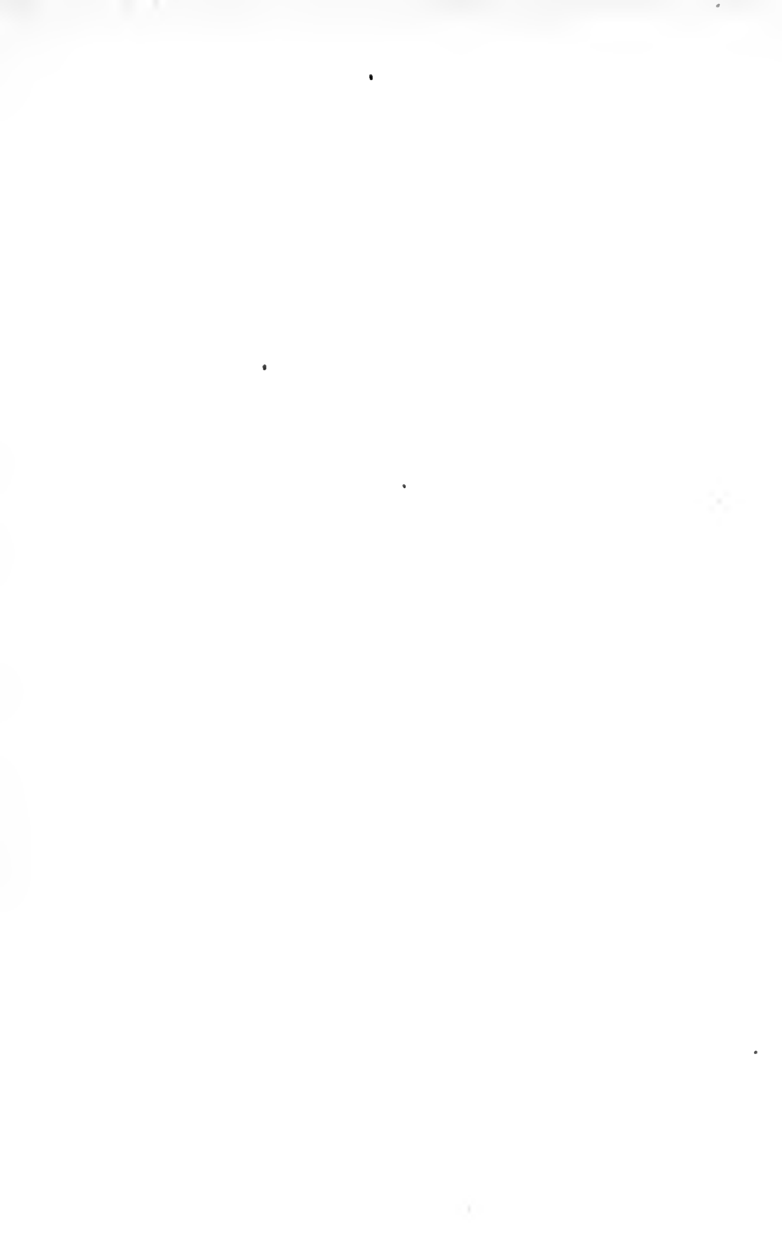
V

We have taken a flying view of these domestic affairs and the people involved in them, as they stood twelve years or so before the date of the ensuing correspondence. Something may now be understood of the characters and positions of the writers; enough, no doubt, to make the letters comprehensible without interloping notes or commentaries. Much incident is not here to be looked for; what story there is to tell ought at least to be given with clearness and coherence. There remains only by way of preface to sum up the changes that fell out between 1849 and 1861.

At the latter date two deaths and two marriages had taken place; old Lord Cheyne, much bewept by earnest and virtuous men of all classes, had died, laborious to the last in the great cause of human improvement, and his son, a good deal sobered by the lapse of time and friction of accident, had married, in May, 1859, within a year of his accession as aforesaid, his cousin Mrs. Stanford's daughter; she was married on her eighteenth birthday, and there was

no great ado made about it. John Cheyne had died a year before his brother, having lived long enough to see his daughter well married, in 1857, to Mr. Ernest Radworth, whose fame as a man of science had gone on increasing ever since he came into his property in 1853, at the age of twenty-one. His researches in osteology were of especial value and interest; he was in all ways a man of great provincial mark.

There is not much else to say; unless it may be worth adding that Francis Cheyne was at college by this time, with an eye to the bar in years to come; his father's property had been much cut into by the share assigned to his sister, and there was just a fair competence left him to start upon. When not at Oxford, he lived usually at Lidcombe or at Blocksham, seldom by himself at home; but had for some little time past shown a distinct preference of his cousin's house to his brother-in-law's, Lord Cheyne and he being always on the pleasantest terms. With this cousin, eighteen years older than himself, he got on now much better than with his old companion Reginald Harewood, whose Oxford career had just ended in the passing over his hapless head of the untimely plough, and whose friends, all but Lady Midhurst, had pretty well washed their hands of him.



A Year's Letters

I

LADY MIDHURST TO MRS. RADWORTH

Ashton Hildred, *Jan. 12th, '61.*

MY DEAR NIECE:

I WRITE to beg a favour of you, and you are decidedly the one woman alive I could ask it of. There is no question of me in the matter, I assure you; I know how little you owe to a foolish old aunt, and would *on no account* tax your forbearance so far as to assume the very least air of dictation. You will hardly remember what good friends we used to be when you were *a very small member of society indeed.* If I ever tried then to *coax* you into making it up with your brother after some baby dispute, I recollect I always broke down in a lamentable way. The one chance at that time was to put the thing before you on rational grounds. I am trying to act on that experience now.

This is rather a stupid *grand* sort of beginning, when all I really have to say is that I want to see the whole family on comfortable terms again—especially to make you and Amicia friends. For you know it is hopeless to persuade an old woman who is not quite in her dotage that there has not been a certain coldness—say coolness—of late in the relations between you and those Lidcombe people. Since my poor brother's death, no doubt, the place has not had those attractions for Mr. Radworth which it had when there was always some scientific or philanthropic gathering there; indeed, I suppose your house has supplanted Lidcombe as the rallying-point of provincial science for miles. By all I hear you are becoming quite eminent in that line, and it must be delicious for you personally to see how thoroughly your husband begins to be appreciated. I quite envy you the society you must see, and the pleasure you must take in seeing and sharing Mr. Radworth's enjoyment of it. (I trust his sight is improving steadily.) But for all this you should not quite cast off less fortunate people who have not the same tastes and pursuits. You and Cheyne were once so comfortable and intimate that *I am certain* he must frequently regret this change; and Amicia, as you know, sets far more store by you than any other friend she could have about her. Do be

prevailed upon to take pity on the poor child: her husband is a delightful one, and most eager to amuse and gratify, but I know she wants a companion. At her age, my dear, I could not have lived without one; and at yours, if you were not such a philosopher, you ought to be as unable as I was. Men have their uses and their merits, I allow, but you cannot live on them. My friend, by-the-by, was not a good instance to cite, for she played me a fearful trick once; Lady Wells her name was; I had to give her up in the long run; but she was charming at one time, wonderfully bright in her ways, at once quick and soft, as it were—just my idea of Madame de Léry, in "Un Caprice." She was idolized by all sorts of people, authors particularly, for she used to hunt them down with a splendid skill, and make great play with them when caught; but the things the woman used to say! and then the people about her went off and set them all down in their books. The men actually took her stories as samples of what went on daily in a certain circle, and wrote them down, altering the names, as if they had been gospel. She told me some before they got into print; there was nobody she would not mix up in them, and we had to break with her at last in a peaceable way. If you ever see an old novel called (I think) "Vingt-et-Un," or some such

name—I know there are *cards* in it—you will find a picture there of your aunt, painted by the author (a Mr. Caddell) after a design by Lady Wells. I am the Lady Manhurst of that nice book. I cheat at cards; I break the heart of a rising poet (that is, I never would let Sir Thomas invite Mr. Caddell); and I make two brothers fight a duel, and one is killed through my direct agency. I run away with a Lord Avery; I am not certain that my husband dies a natural death; I rather think, indeed, that I poison him in the last chapter but one. Finally, I become a Catholic; and Lord Avery recognizes me in the conventual garb, the day after my noviciate is out, and immediately takes leave of his senses. I hope I died penitent; but I really forget about that. You see what sort of things one could make people believe in those days; I suppose there is no fear of a *liaison dangereuse* of that sort between you and poor little Amicia. She has not much of the Lady Wells type in her.

I have a graver reason, as you probably imagine by this time, for wishing you to see a little of Amicia just now. It is rather difficult to write about, but I am sure you will see things better for yourself than I could make you if I were to scribble for ever in this cautious roundabout way; and I can trust so thoroughly in your

good feeling and good sense and acuteness, that I know you will do what is right and useful and honourable. It is a great thing to know of anybody who has a head that can be relied upon. Good hearts and good feelings are easy to pick up, but a good clear sensible head is a godsend. Nothing else could ever get us through this little family business in reasonable quiet.

I fear you must have heard some absurd running rumours about your brother's last stay at Lidcombe. People who always see what never exists are beginning to talk of his *devotion* to poor dear Amicia. Now I of course know, and you of course know, that there never could be anything serious on foot in such a quarter. The boy is hardly of age, and might be at school as far as that goes. Besides, Cheyne and Amicia are devoted to each other, as we all see. My only fear would be for poor Frank himself. If he did get any folly of a certain kind into his head it might cause infinite personal trouble, and give serious pain to more people than one. I have seen more than once how much real harm can come out of such things. I wonder if you ever heard your poor father speak of Mrs. Askew, Walter Askew's wife, who was a great beauty in our time? Both my brothers used to rave about her; she had features of that pure long type you get in

pictures, and eyes that were certainly *mieux fendus* than any I ever saw, dim deep grey, half lighted under the heaviest eyelids, with a sleepy sparkle in them: faulty in her carriage, very; you had to look at her sitting to understand the effect she used to make. Her husband was very fond of her, and a cleverish sort of man, but too light and lazy to do all he should have done. Well, a Mr. Chetwood, the son of a very old friend of mine (they used to live here), became infatuated about her. Spent days and days in pursuit of her; made himself a perfect jest. Everywhere she went there was this wretched man hanging on at her heels. They were not much to hang on to, by-the-bye, for she had horrid feet. To this day I believe he never got anything by it; if the woman ever cared for anybody in her life it was your father; but Mr. Askew had to take notice of it at last; the other got into a passion and insulted him (I am afraid they were both over-excited—it was after one of my husband's huge dinners, and they came up in a most dreadful state of rage, and trying to behave well, with their faces actually trembling all over and the most fearful eyes), and there was a duel and the husband was killed, and Chetwood had to fly the country, people made it out such a bad case, and he was ruined—died abroad within the year; he

had spent all his money before the last business. The woman arterwards married Dean Bainbridge, the famous Waterworth preacher, you know, who used to be such a friend of my friend Captain Harewood's for the last year or two of his life; he had buried his third wife by that time; Mrs. A. was the *second*. He was a detestable man, and had a voice exactly like a cat with a bad cold in the head.

Now if anything of this sort were to happen to Francis (not that I am afraid of my two nephews cutting each other's throats—but so much may happen short of that), it is just the kind of thing he might never get well over. He and Amy are about the same age, I think, or he may be a year older. In a case like this, of amicable intimacy between two persons, one married, there is necessarily a certain floating amount of ridicule implied, even where there is nothing more; and the whole of this ridicule must fall in the long run upon the elder person of the two. I am not sure, of course, that there is any ground for fear just now, but to avoid the least chance of scandal, still more of ridicule, it is always worth while being at *any* pains. Nobody knows *how* well worth while it is till they are turned of thirty. Now you must see, supposing there is anything in this unfortunate report, that I cannot possibly be of the least use. Imagine me writing

to that poor child to say she must not see so much of her cousin, or to Frank imploring him to spare the domestic peace of Lidcombe! It would be too absurd for me to seem as if I saw or heard anything of the matter. A screeching, cackling grandmother, running round the yard with all her frowsy old feathers ruffled at the sight of such a miserable red rag as that, would be a thing to laugh at for a year; and I have no intention of helping people to a laugh at my white hairs (they are quite white now).

Or would you have me write to Cheyne? *La bonne farce!* as Redgie Harewood says, since he has been in Paris. Conceive the delicate impressive way one would have to begin the letter in, so as not to arouse the dormant serpents in a husband's heart. Think of the soft suggestive Iago style one would have to adopt, so as to intimate the awfullest possibilities without any hard flat assertion. Poor good Edmund too, of all people! Imagine the bewildered way in which he would begin the part of Othello, without in the least knowing how—without so much as an Ethiopian dye to help him out! You must allow that in writing to you I have done all I could; more, I do believe and hope, than there was any need of my doing; but I look to your goodness and affection for your brother to excuse me. I want merely to suggest that you should keep a

quiet friendly watch over Frank, so as to save him any distress or difficulty in the future. A sister rather older and wiser than himself ought really to be about the best help and mainstay a boy of his age can have. If I had had but five years or so more to back me, I might have saved your father some scrapes at that time of life.

I have one more petition to my dear niece: be as patient with my garrulous *exigeance* as you can. If you see Reginald Harewood this winter, as I dare say you will—he is pretty sure to be at Lidcombe before the month is out—may I beg your *bienveillance* towards the poor boy? He is "sat upon" (as he says) just now to such an extent that it is a real charity in any one to show him a little kindness. I know his brilliant college career is not a prepossessing episode in his history; but so many boys do so much worse —and come off so much better! That insufferable Captain Harewood behaves as if every one else's son had made the most successful studies, and at the end of three years saved up a small but decent income out of his annual allowance. If my father had only had to pay two hundred for the college debts of yours! I cannot conceive what parents will be in the next generation: I am sure we were good-natured enough in ours, and you see what our successors are.

If Mr. Radworth has spare time enough, in

the intervals of his invaluable labours, to be reminded of an old woman's unprofitable existence, will you remember me to him in the kindest way? and, if you have toiled through my letter, accept the love and apologies of your affectionate aunt.

II

MRS. RADWORTH TO FRANCIS CHEYNE

Blocksham, *Jan. 16th.*

MY DEAR FRANK:

IF you had taken my advice you would have arranged either to stay up at Oxford during the vacation, or at least to be back by the beginning of next term. Of course, we should like of all things to have you here as long as you chose to stay, and it would be nicer for you, I should think, than going back to fog and splashed snow in London; but our half engagement to Lidcombe upsets everything. Ernest is perfectly restless just now; between his dislike of moving and his wish to see the old Lidcombe museum again, he does nothing but *papillonner* about the house in a beetle-headed way, instead of sticking to his cobwebs, as a domestic spider should. Are you also bent upon Lidcombe? For, if you go, we go. Make up your mind to that. If you don't, I can easily persuade Ernest that his museum has fallen to dust and tatters under the existing dynasty, which,

indeed, is not so unlikely to be true. Amicia writes very *engagingly* to me, just the sort of letter one would have expected, limp, amiable, rather a smirking style; flaccid condescension; evidently feels herself agreeable and gracious. I am rather curious to see how things get on there. You seem to have impressed people somehow with an idea that during your last visit the household harmony suffered some blow or other which it has not got over yet. Is there any truth in the notion? But of course, if there were, I should have known of it before now, if I were ever to know it at all.

I have had a preposterous letter from Aunt Midhurst; the woman is really getting past her work: her satire is vicious, stupid, pointless to a degree. Somebody has been operating on her fangs, I suppose, and extracting the venom. It is curious to remember what one always heard about her wit and insight and power of reading character; she has fallen into a sort of hashed style, between a French *portière* and a Dickens nurse. It makes one quite sorry to read the sort of stuff she has come to writing, and think that she was once great as a talker and letter-writer —like looking at her grey fierce old face (*museau de louve*, as she called it once to me) and remembering that she was thought a beauty. Still you know some people to this day talk about the

softness and beauty of her face and looks, and I suppose she is different to them. To me she always looked like a cat, or some bad sort of bird, with those greyish-green eyes and their purple pupils.

I need hardly tell you that since you were here last the place has been most dismal. Ernest has taken to insects now; *il me manquait cela*. He has a room full of the most dreadful specimens. In the evenings he reads me extracts from his MS. treatise on the subject, which is to be published in the "County Philosophical and Scientific Transactions." *C'est réjouissant!* After all, I think you are right not to come here more than you can help. The charity your coming would be to me you must know; but no doubt it would have to be too dearly paid for.

Lady Midhurst tells me that your ex-ally in old days, and my ex-enemy, Reginald Harewood, is to be at Lidcombe by the end of this month. Have you seen him since the *disgraceful* finale of his Oxford studies? I remember having met him a month or two since when I called on *her* in London, and he did not seem to me much improved. One is rather sorry for him, but it is really too much to be expected to put up with that kind of young man because of his disadvantages. I hope you do not mean to renew

that absurd sort of intimacy which he had drawn you into at one time.

I am rather anxious to see Lidcombe in its present state, so I think we shall have to go; but seriously, if people are foolish enough to talk about your *relations* there, I would not go, in your place. I am not going to write you homilies after the fashion of Lady M., or appeal to your good feeling on the *absurd* subject; I never did go in for advice. Do as you like, but I don't think you ought to go.

Ernest no doubt would send you all sorts of messages, but I am not going to break in upon the room sacred to beetles and bones; so you must be content with my love and good wishes for the year.

III

LADY MIDHURST TO LADY CHEYNE

Ashton Hildred, *Jan. 24th.*

My Dear Child:

You are nervous about your husband's part in the business; *cela se voit;* but I hardly see why you are to come crying to an old woman like me about the matter. Tears on paper are merely blots, please remember; you cannot write them out gracefully. Try to compress your style a little; be as sententious as you can—terse complaints are really effective. I never cried over a letter but once, and then it was over one of my husband's! Poor good Sir Thomas was naturally given to the curt hard style, and yet one could see he was almost out of his mind with distress. I suppose you know we lived apart in a quiet way for the last ten years of his life. It was odd he should take it to heart in the way he did; for I know he was *quite seriously* in love with a *most horrid* little French actress that had been (I believe she was Irish myself, but she called herself Mlle. des Grèves—*such* a name!

I'm *almost certain* her real one was Ellen Greaves—a dreadful wretch of a woman, with a complexion like bad fruit, absolutely a greenish brown when you saw her in some lights); and the poor man used to whimper about Hélène to his friends in a perfectly abject way. Captain H. told me so; he was of *my* friends at that epoch; he was courting your mother, and in consequence hers also. Indeed, I believe he was in love with me at the time, though I am ten years older; however, I imagine it looks the other way now. When I saw him last he was greyer than Ernest Radworth. That wife of his (E. R.'s, I mean) is enough to turn any man's hair grey; I assure you, my dear child, she makes my three hairs stand on end. Her style is something too awful, like the most detestable sort of young man. She will be the ruin of poor dear Redgie if we don't pick him up somehow and keep him out of her way. He was quite the nicest boy I ever knew, and used to make me laugh by the hour; there was a splendid natural silliness in him, and quantities of *verve* and fun—what Mrs. Radworth, I suppose, calls pluck or go. Still, when one thinks she is breaking Ernest's heart and bringing Captain Harewood's *first* grey hairs to the grave with vexation, I declare I could forgive her a good deal if she were only a lady. But she isn't in the least,

and I am ashamed to remember she is my niece; her manners are exactly what Mlle. Greaves's must have been, allowing for the difference of times. I am quite certain she will be the death of poor Redgie. He was always the most unfortunate boy on this earth; I dare say you remember how he was brought up — always worried and punished and sermonized, ever since he was a perfect baby; enough to drive any boy mad, and get him into an infinity of the most awful scrapes when he grew up: but I did think he might have kept out of this one. Clara Radworth must be at least six years older than he is. I believe she has taken to painting already. If there was only a little bit of scandal in the matter! but that is past praying for. It is a regular quiet amicable innocent alliance; the very worst thing for such a boy in the world.

I have gone on writing about your poor brother and all those dreadful people, and quite forgotten all I meant to say to you: but really I want you to exert your influence over Redgie. Get him to come and stay with you at once, before the Radworths arrive; I wish to Heaven he could come here to be talked round. I know I could manage him. Didn't I manage him when he was fourteen, and ran away from home over here, and you brought him in? You were delicious at eleven, my dear, and fell in love with

him on the spot, like your (and his) old grandmother. Didn't I send him back at once, though I saw what a state he was in, poor dear boy, and in spite of you and his mother? I could cry to this day when I think what a beautiful boy he was to look at, and how hard it was to pack him off in that way, knowing as we all did that he would be three-quarters murdered when he got home (and I declare Captain Harewood ought to have been put in the pillory for the way he used to whip that boy every day in the week—I firmly believe it was all out of spite to his mother and me); and you all thought me and your father desperately cruel people, you know, as bad as Redgie's father; but I was nearly as soft at heart as either of you, and after he went away in the gig I cried for five minutes by myself. Never cry in public (that is, of course, not irrepressibly) as your mother did then, and if you ever have children don't put your arms round their necks and make scenes; it never did any good, and people always get angry, for it makes them look fools, and they give you an absurd reputation in the boiled-milk line. Your father was quite put out with her after that demonstrative scene with Redgie, and it only made matters worse for the boy at parting, without saving him a single cut of the rod when he got home, poor fellow! I never

was sorrier for anybody myself; he was such a pretty boy; you ought to remember: for after all he is your half-brother, and might have been a whole one if Captain H. had not been such a ruffian. Your poor mother never was the best of managers, but she had a great deal to bear.

Here I have got off again on the subject of my stupid old affection for Redgie, and made you think me the most unbearable of grandmothers. I must try and show you that there are some sparks of sense left in the ashes of my old woman's twaddle. But do you know you have made it really difficult for me to advise you? You write asking what to do, and I have only to think what I want you to avoid; for of course you will do the reverse of what I tell you. And in effect it seems to me to matter very little what you do just now. However, read over this next paragraph; construe it carefully by contraries; and see what you think of that in the way of advice.

Invite Frank to Lidcombe, as soon as the Radworths come; get up your plan of conduct after some French novel—Balzac is a good model if you can live up to him; encourage Mrs. Radworth, don't snub her in any way, let her begin patronizing you again; she will if you manage her properly; be quite the child with her, and, if

you can, be the fool with her husband; but you must play this stroke very delicately, just the least push in the world, so as to try for a cannon off the cushion; touch these two very lightly so as to get them into a nice place for you, when you must choose your next stroke. I should say, get the two balls into the middle pocket—if I thought there was a chance of your understanding. But I can hear you saying, "*Middle* pocket? such an absurd way of trying at wit!—and what does it mean after all?" My dear, there is a moral middle pocket in every nice well-regulated family; always remember and act on this. If Lord Cheyne or Mrs. Radworth, or either of them, can but be got into it quietly, there is your game. The lower pocket would spoil all, however neatly you played for it; but this I know you will never understand. And yet I assure you all the beauty of the game depends on it.

If you don't like this style—I should be very sorry if you did, and it would give me the *worst* opinion of your *head*—I can only give you little practical hints, on the chance of their being useful. You know I never had any great liking for my nephew Francis. His father was certainly the stupider of my two brothers; and, my dear, you have no idea what that implies. If you had known your husband's father, your own great-

uncle, you would not believe me when I say his brother was stupider. But John was; I suppose there never was a greater idiot than John. Rather a clever idiot, too, and used to work and live desperately hard on occasion; but, good Heavens! And I can't help thinking the children take after him in some things. Clara to be sure is the image of her mother—a portentous image it is, and I do sometimes think one ought to try and be sorry for Ernest Radworth, but I positively cannot; and Frank is not without his points of likeness to her. Still the father will crop out, as people say nowadays in their ugly slang. Keep an eye on the father, my dear, and compare him with your husband when he does turn up. I don't want you to be rude to anybody, or to put yourself out of the way in the least. Only not to trust either of those two cousins too far. As for Cheyne's liking for Clara Radworth, I wouldn't vex myself about that. She cares more just now for the younger bird—I declare the woman makes me talk her style, at sixty and a little over. There is certainly something very good about her, whatever we two may think. If you will hold her off Redgie while he is in the house (do, for my sake, I entreat of you) I will warrant your husband against her. She will not try anything in that quarter unless she has something else in

hand. Cheyne is an admirable double; any pleasant sort of woman can attract him *to her*, but no human power will attract him *from you*. There is your comfort—or your curse, as you choose to make it. C. R. would never think of him except as a background in one of her pictures. He would *throw out* Redgie, for example, beautifully, and give immense life and meaning to the composition of her effects. But as I know you have no other visitor at Lidcombe who is *human* in any mentionable degree, I imagine she will rest on her oars—if you do but keep her off my poor Redgie. You see I want you to have a sight of them together, that you may study and understand her—on that ground *only* I authorize you to invite her and Ernest while Redgie is still with you (besides you will be better able to help him if you see it beginning again *under your face*); not in the least because the Radworths' being there is a pretext for inviting Frank Cheyne, and Clara a good fire-screen for you; *à Dieu ne plaise*, I am not quite such a liberal old woman as that.

But I want you to be *light* in your handling of C. R.; give her *play:* it will be a charming education for you. If you do this—even supposing I am wrong about your husband's *devotion* to you—you are sure of him. Item: if you can once *come over* her (but for Heaven's sake don't

irritate or really frighten her) she will be a capital friend for you. Find out, too, how her brother feels towards her, and write me word, that I may form my own ideas as to him. If he appreciates without overrating her there must be some sense in him. She is one of those women who are usually overrated by the men, and underrated by the women, capable of appreciating them. Mind you never take to despising *any* character of that sort. I mean if there *is* a character in the case.

I have written you a shamefully long letter, and hardly a word to the point in it I dare say you think; besides, I am not at all sure I should have written part of it to a good young married woman; there is one comfort, you won't see what I mean in the least. One thing you must take on trust, that I do seriously with all my heart hope and mean to serve you, my dear child, and help you to live well and wisely and happily—as I must say you ought. Do take care of Redgie; I regard that boy as at least three years younger than you instead of three years older. Love to both of you, from your mother and

Your very affectionate

H. Midhurst.

IV

FRANCIS CHEYNE TO MRS. RADWORTH

London, *Jan. 25th.*

MY DEAREST CLARA:

I AM off to Lidcombe in a fortnight's time, and shall certainly not return to Oxford (if I do at all) till the summer term. I really wonder you should think it worth while to dwell for a second on what Lady Midhurst may choose to say: for I cannot suppose you have any other grounds to go on than this letter of hers; and certainly I do not intend to alter my plans in the least on account of her absurdities. You must remember what our father used to say about her "impotent incontinence of tongue." I should be ashamed to let a vicious, virulent old aunt influence me in any way. I am fond of our cousins, and enjoy being with them; it is a nice house to stay at, and, as long as we all enjoy being there together, I cannot see why we should listen to any spiteful and senseless commentaries. To meet you there will of course make it all the pleasanter; I need not fear that you will take the overseer line with me, what-

ever our aunt's wisdom may suggest. As to Amicia, I think she is very delightful to be with, and fond of us all in a friendly amiable way; and I know she is very beautiful and agreeable to look at or talk to, which never spoils anything; but as to falling in love, you must have the sense to know that nobody over eighteen, or out of a bad French novel, would run his head into such a mess: to say nothing of the absurdity or the villainy of such a thing. It all comes of the ridiculous and infamous sort of reading which I have no doubt the dear aunt privately indulges in. I do hope you will never quote her authority to me again, even in chaff. I never can believe that she really had the bringing up of Amicia in her own hands; it is wonderful how little of the Midhurst mark has been left on *her*. I suppose her father was a nicer sort of fellow to begin with; for as to our cousin Mrs. Stanford, one can hardly suppose that she bequeathed Amy an antidote to her own blood. I am sure her son has enough of the original stamp on him: I do not wonder at Lady M.'s liking for him, considering. You decidedly need not be in the least afraid of any excessive intimacy between us. Redgie Harewood has been some weeks in town it seems, and I have met him two or three times. I agree with you that he is just what he used to be, only on a

growing scale. At school I remember he used simply to *flâner* nine days out of ten, and on the tenth either get into some serious row, or turn up with a decent set of verses for once in a way. I dare say he will be rather an available sort of inmate at Lidcombe; you will have to put up with him at all events if you go, for I believe he is there already. Really, if you can get on with him at first, I think you will find there are worse fellows going. It appears, for one thing, that his admiration of you is immense. He does me the honour to seek me out, rather with a view I suppose of getting me to talk about you. That meeting here in London, after his final flight from Oxford mists in the autumn term, seems to have done for him just now. So, if you ever begin upon the subject of Amicia to me, I shall retort upon you with that desirable brother of hers. I should like to see old Harewood's face if his son were ever to treat him to such a rhapsody as was inflicted upon me the last time Reginald was in my rooms here.

I start next week, so probably I shall be at Lord Cheyne's before you. Come as soon as you can after me, and take care of Ernest. Do as you like for the rest, but pray write no more Midhurst letters at second-hand to

Your affectionate brother,

FRANCIS CHEYNE.

V

LADY CHEYNE TO FRANCIS CHEYNE

Lidcombe, *Feb. 1st.*

You know, I hope, that we expect your sister and Mr. Radworth in the course of the week? I have had the kindest letter from her, and it will be a real pleasure to see something more of them at last. I have always liked your brother-in-law very much; I never could understand your objection to scientific men. They seem to me the most quiet, innocuous, good sort of people one could wish to see. I quite understand Clara's preferring one to a political or poetical kind of man. You and Reginald are oppressive with your violent theories and enthusiasms, but a nice peaceable spirit of research never puts out anybody. I remember thinking Mr. Radworth's excitement and delight about his last subject of study quite touching; I am sure I should enter into his pursuits most ardently if I were his wife. It is strange to me to remember I have not seen either of them since they called last at Ashton Hildred, a few months before

my marriage. I suspect your sister has a certain amount of contempt for my age and understanding; all I hope is that I shall not disgrace myself in the eyes of such a clever person as she is. Clara is one of the people I have always been a little in awe of; and I quite believe, if the truth were known, you are rather of the same way of feeling yourself. However, I look to you to help me, and I dare say she will be lenient on the whole. Her letter was very gracious.

I suppose you have heard of Reginald's arrival? He is wild at the notion of seeing your sister again. I never saw anybody so excited or so intense in his way of expressing admiration. It seems she is his idea of perfect grace and charm; I am very glad he has such a good one, but he is dreadfully unflattering to me in the meantime, and wants to form everybody upon her model. I hope you are not so inflammable on European matters as he seems to be; but I know you used to be worse. Since he has taken up with Italy, there is no living with him on conservative terms. Last year he was in such a state of mind about Garibaldi and the Sicilian business that he would hardly take notice of such insignificant people as we are. My husband has gone through all that stage (he says he has), and is now rather impatient of the sort

of thing; he has become a steady ally, on principle, of strong governments. No doubt, as he says, men come to see things differently at thirty, and understand their practical bearing; but nothing will get Reginald to take a sane view of the question, or (as Cheyne puts it) to consider possibilities and make allowance for contingent results. So, you see, you are wanted dreadfully to keep peace between the factions. Redgie is quite capable of challenging his brother-in-law to mortal combat on the issue of the Roman question.

Lord Cheyne is busy just now with some private politics of his own, about which he admits of no advice. If he should ever take his seat, and throw his weight openly into the scale of his party, I suppose neither you nor Reginald would ever speak to either of us? I wish there were no *questions* in the world; but after all I think they hardly divide people as much as they threaten to do. So we must hope to retain our friends as long as they will endure us, in spite of opinions, and make the most of them in the interval. We look for you on the fifth.

Believe me, ever your affectionate cousin,

A. Cheyne.

VI

LADY MIDHURST TO REGINALD HAREWOOD

Ashton Hildred, *Feb. 21st.*

OH, if you were but five or six years younger (you *know* you were at school six years ago, my dear boy)! what a letter I would write your tutor! Upon my word I should like of all things to get you a good sound flogging. It is the only way to manage you, I am persuaded. I wish to Heaven I had the handling of you: when I think how sorry we all were for you when you were a boy and your father used to flog you! You wrote me the comicallest letters in those days; I have got some still. If I had only known how richly you deserved it! Captain Harewood always let you off too easily, I have not an atom of doubt. How any one can be such a mere school-boy at your age I cannot possibly conceive. People have no business to treat you like a man. You are nothing but a great dull dunce of a fifth-form boy (lower fifth, if you please), and ought to be treated like one. You don't look at things in a grown-up way.

I want to know what on earth took you to Lidcombe when those Radworths were there? Of course you can't say. Now I tell you, you had better have put that harebrained absurd boy's head of yours into a wasps' nest—do you remember a certain letter of yours to me, nine years ago, about wasps, and what a *jolly good swishing* you got for running your head into a nest of them, against all orders? you thought it *no end of a chouse* then (I kept your letter, you see; I do keep children's letters sometimes, they are such fun—I could show you some of Amicia's that are perfect studies) to be birched for getting stung, though it was only a good wholesome counter-irritant; if all the smart had been in your face, I have no doubt you would have been quite ill for a week; luckily your dear good father knew of a counter-cure for inflammation of the skin. Well, I can tell you now that what you suffered at that tender age was nothing to what you will have to bear now if you don't *run at once*. Neither the stinging of wasps nor the stinging of birch rods is one-quarter so bad as the hornets' stings and vipers' bites you are running the risk of. You will say I can't know that, not having your experience as to one infliction at least; but I have been stung, and I have been talked of; and if any quantity of whipping you ever got made you smart more

than the latter process has made me, all I can say is that between your father and the birch you must assuredly have got your deserts for once, in a way to satisfy even me if I had seen it. I hope you have, once or twice, in your younger days; if so, you must have been flogged within an inch of your life.

However that may be, I assure you I have been talked within an inch of mine more than once. And so will you if you go on. I entreat and implore you to take my silly old word for it. Of course I am well enough aware you don't mind; boys never do till they are eaten up body and bones. But you really (as no doubt you were often told in the old times of Dr. Birkenshaw)—you really must be made to mind, my dear Redgie. It is a great deal worse for a man than for a woman to get talked about in such a way as you two will be. If there was any real danger for your cousin you don't suppose I would let Amicia have you both in the house at once? But as you are the only person who can possibly come to harm through this nonsensical business, I can only write to you and bore you to death. I have no doubt you are riding with Clara at this minute; or writing verses—Amicia sent me your last seaside sonnet—detestable it was; or boating; or doing something dreadful. It is really exceedingly bad for you: I wish to

goodness you had a profession, or were living in London at least. If you could but hear me talking you over with Mr. Stanford! and the heavy smiling sort of way in which he "regrets that young Harewood should be wasting his time in that lamentable manner—believes there was some good in him at one time, but this miserable *vie de flâneur*, Lady Midhurst" (I always bow when he speaks French in his fearful accent, and that stops him), "would ruin any boy. Is very glad Amicia should see something of him now and then, but if he is always to be on those terms with his father—most disgraceful," and so forth. Now, do be good for once, and think it over. I don't mean what your stepfather says (at least, the man who ought to have been your stepfather, if your filial fondness will forgive me for the hint), but the way people will look at it. I suppose I should pique you dreadfully if I were to tell you that nobody in the whole earth imagines for a second that there is a serious side to the business. You are not a compromising sort of person—you won't be for some years yet; and you *cannot* compromise Clara. She knows that. So does Amicia. So does Ernest Radworth even, or he ought, if he has anything behind his spectacles whatever, which I have always felt uncertain of. I wonder if I may give you a soft light sugges-

tion or two about the object of your vows and verse? I take my courage in both hands and begin. C. R. (you will remember I saw nearly as much of her when she was a girl as I did of Amicia, and I always made a point of getting my nephews and nieces off by heart) is one of the cleverest *stupid* women I know, but nothing more. Her tone is, distinctly, bad. She has the sense to know this, but not to improve it. The best thing I have ever noticed about her is that, under these circumstances, she resolves to make the most of it. And I quite allow she is very effective when at her best—very taking, especially with boys. When she was quite little, she was the delight of male playfellows; girls always detested her, as women do now. (You may put down my harsh judgment of her to the score of my being a woman, if you think one can be a woman at my age—a thing I believe to be impossible, if one has had the very smallest share of brains to start with.) She can't be better than her style, but she won't be worse. I prefer Amicia, I must say; but, when one thinks she might have been like Lady Frances Law—I assure you I do Clara justice when I recollect the existence of that woman,—or Lucretia Fielding (you must have seen her at Lidcombe); but, if I had had a niece like that, I should have died of her. A rapid something in

phobia—neptiphobia would it be? I suppose not; it sounds barbaric, but my Greek was always very shaky. I learned of my husband; he had been consul at some horrible hole or other; but, anyhow, it would have carried me off—in ten days, at the outside. And I hope she would have been hanged.

The upshot of all this is just that our dear C. R. is one of the *safest* women alive. Not for other people, mind; not safe for you; not safe by any means for her husband; but as safe for herself as I am, or as the Queen is. She knows her place, and keeps to it; and any average man or woman who will just do that can do anything. She is a splendid manager in her way—a bad, petty, rather unwise way, I must and do think; but she is admirable in it. Like a *genre* painter. Her *forte* is Murillo beggar-boys; don't you sit to her. A slight sketch now and then in the Leech sporting manner is all very well. Even a single study between whiles in the Callot style may pass. But the gypsy sentiment I cannot stand. Seriously, my dear Redgie, I will not have it. When she has posed for the ordinary *fastish* woman, she goes in for a sort of Madonna-Gitana, a cross of Raphael with Bohemia. It will not do for you.

Shall I tell you the real, simple truth once for all? I have a great mind, but I am really afraid

you will take to hating me. Please don't, my dear boy, if you can help, for I had always a great weakness for you, honestly. I hope you will always be decently fond of me in the long run, *malgré* all the fast St. Agneses in gypsydom. Well, then, she never was in love but once, and never will be again. It was with my nephew Edmund—Amicia knows it perfectly—when his father was alive. She fought for the title and the man with a dexterity and vigour and suppleness of intellect that was really beautiful in such a girl as she was—delicious to see. I have always done justice to her character since then. My brother would not hear of cousins marrying, probably because he had married one of our mother's French connections, who must have been a second cousin, at least, of his own. So Cheyne had to give her up; he was a moral and social philosopher in those days, and an attachment more or less was not much to him—he was off with her in no time. But, take my word for it, at one time he had been on with her, and things had gone some distance; people began to talk of her as Lady Cheyne that was to be. She was a still better study after that defeat than when in the thick of the fight. It steadied her for life, and she married Ernest Radworth in six months. Three years after my poor brother died, and the year after that I married Edmund

to our dear good little Amicia, as I mean to marry you some day to a Queen of Sheba.

When I say Clara's failure steadied her, you know what I mean; it made her much more *fast* and *loud* than she was before—helped in my poor opinion to spoil her style, but that is beside the question; the real point is that it made her sensible. She is wonderfully sensible for a clever person who is (I must maintain) naturally stupid, or she would have gone on a higher tack altogether and been one of the most noticeable people alive. It is exquisite, charming to an old woman, to observe how thoroughly she is up to all the points of all her games. She amuses herself in all sorts of the most ingenious ways; makes that wretch Ernest's life an Egyptian plague by constant friction of his inside skin and endless needle-probings of his sore mental places: enjoys all kinds of fun, sparingly and heartily at once, like a thoroughly initiated Epicurean (that woman is an esoteric of the Garden): and never for an instant slips aside from the strait gate and narrow way, while she has all the flowers and smooth paving of the broad one—at least all the enjoyment of them; or perhaps something better. She is sublime; anything you like; but she is not wholesome. If she were only the least bit cleverer than she is I would never say a word. Indeed, it would

be the best training in the world for you to fall into the hands of a real and high genius. But you must wait. Show me Athénaïs de Montespan and I will allow you *any* folly on her account; but with Louise de la Vallière I will *not* let you commit yourself. You will say C. R. is something more than this last; I know she is; but not enough. If you had had your English history well flogged into you, as it should have been if I had had the managing of matters—and I should have if your father had not been the most—never mind—you would have learnt to appreciate her. She is quite Elizabethan, weakened by a dash of Mary Stuart. At your age you cannot possibly understand how anybody can be at once excitable and cold. If you will take my word for that fact, I will throw you another small piece of experience into the bargain. A person who does happen to combine those two qualities has the happiest temperament *imaginable*. She can enjoy herself, her excitability secures that; and she will never enjoy herself too much or pay too high a price for anything. These people are always exceedingly acute, unless they are absolute dunces, and then they hardly count. I don't mean that their acuteness prevents them from being fools, especially if they have a strong stupid element in them, as many clever excitable people have,

notamment ladite Marie, who was admirably and fearfully foolish for such a clever cold intellect as she had. I fancy our friend has more of the Elizabeth in her; quite as dangerous a variety. If she ever does get an impulse, God help her friends; but there will be no fear even then for herself: not the least. Only do you take care; you have not the stuff to make a Leicester; and I don't want you to play Essex to a silver-gilt Elizabeth. Silver?—she is just pinchbeck all through. As to heart, that is, and style; her wits are well enough.

Now, if you have got thus far (but I am convinced you will not), you ought to understand (but I would lay any wager you don't) what my judgment of her is, and what yours ought to be. She is admirable, I repeat again and again, but she ought not to be adorable to you; the great points about her are just those which appeal to the experience of an old woman. The side of her that a boy like you can see of himself is just the side he ought not to care about. Of course he will like it if he is not warned; but I have warned you: quite in vain, I am fully prepared to hear. If you are in effect allured and fascinated by the bad weak side of her I can't help it: *liberavi animam meam;* I suppose even my dunce of the lower fifth (at twenty-three) can construe that. My hand aches, and you may

thank Heaven it does, or you would get a fresh *dressing* (as people call it) on paper. Do, my dear, try to make sense of this long dawdling wandering scrawl: I meant to be of some use when I began. I don't want to have my nice old Redgie made into a burnt-offering on the twopenny tinselled side-altar of St. Agnes of Bohemia.

I send no message to the Lidcombe people, as I wrote to Amicia yesterday. Give my compliments to your father if you dare. I must really be very good to waste my time and trouble on a set of girls and boys who are far above caring to understand what an old woman means by her advice. You seem to me, all of you, even younger than your ages; I wish you would stick to dolls and cricket. *Cependant*, as to you, my dear boy, I am always

Your affectionate grandmother,

HELENA MIDHURST.

P.S.—You can show this letter to dear Clara if you like.

VII

REGINALD HAREWOOD TO EDWARD AUDLEY

Lidcombe, *March 1st.*

DID you see last year in the Exhibition a portrait by Fairfax of my cousin Mrs. Radworth? You know of course I am perfectly well aware the man is an exquisite painter, with no end of genius and great qualities in his work; but I declare he made a mull of that picture. It was what fellows call a fiasco—complete. Imagine sticking her into a little crib of a room with a window and some flowers and things behind her, and all that splendid hair of hers done up in some beastly way. And then people say the geraniums and the wainscot were stunning pieces of colour, or some such rot; when the fellow ought to have painted her out-of-doors, or on horseback, or something. I wish I could sit a horse half as well; she is the most graceful and the pluckiest rider you ever saw. I rode with her yesterday to Hadleigh, down by the sea, and we had a gallop over the sands; three miles good, and all hard sand; the finest ground possible;

when I was staying here as a boy I used to go out with the grooms before breakfast, and exercise the horses there instead of taking them up to the downs. She had been out of spirits in the morning, and wanted the excitement to set her up. I never saw her look so magnificent; her hair was blown down and fell in heavy uncurling heaps to her waist; her face looked out of the frame of it, hot and bright, with the eyes lighted, expanding under the lift of those royal wide eyelids of hers. I could hardly speak to her for pleasure, I confess; don't show my avowals. I rode between her and the sea, a thought behind; a gust of wind blowing off land drove a wave of her hair across my face, upon my lips; she felt it somehow, I suppose, for she turned and laughed. When we came to ride back, and had to go slower (that Nourmahal of hers is not my notion of what her horse should be—I wish one could get her a real good one), she changed somehow, and began to talk seriously at last; I knew she was not really over happy. Fancy that incredible fool Ernest Radworth never letting her see any one when they are at home, except some of his scientific acquaintances—not a lady in the whole country-side for her to speak to. You should have heard her account of the entertainments in that awful house of theirs, about as much life as there used to be

at my father's. Don't I remember the holiday dinners there!—a parson, a stray military man of the stodgier kind, my tutor, and the pater; I kept after dinner to be chaffed, or lectured, or examined — a jolly time that was. Well, I imagine her life is about as pleasant; or worse, for she can hardly get out to go about at all. People come there with cases of objects, curiosities, stones and bones and books, and lumber the whole place. She had to receive three scientific professors last month; two of them noted osteologists, she said, and one a comparative ichthyologist, or something — a man with pink eyes and a mouth all on one side, who was always blinking and talking—a friend of my great-uncle's, it seems, who presented him years ago to that insane ass Radworth. Think of the pair of them, and of Clara obliged to sit and be civil. She became quite sad towards the end of our ride; said how nice it had been here, and that sort of thing, till I was three-quarters mad. She goes in three or four days. I should like to follow her everywhere, and be her footman or her groom, and see her constantly. I would clean knives and black boots for her. If I had no fellow to speak or write to, I can't think how I should stand things at all.

VIII

FRANCIS CHEYNE TO MRS. RADWORTH

London, *March 15th*

You don't suppose I want you to quarrel with me, my dear Clara? It is folly to tax me with trying (as you say) to *brouiller* you with the Stanfords or with Redgie Harewood. As to the latter, you know we are on good enough terms together; I never was hand and glove with him that I recollect. Do as you like about Portsmouth. I will join you if I can after some time.

But about my extra fortnight at Lidcombe I must write to you. Lord Cheyne is quite gracious, with a faint flavour of impertinence; I never saw one side of him before. (Since I left I have heard twice—once from him and once from Amicia. They talk of coming up. Cheyne thinks of beginning to speak again. I believe myself he never got over your cruel handling of his eloquence six years ago. I remember quite well once during the Easter holidays hearing you and Lady Midhurst laugh about it by the hour.) Amicia is, I more than suspect, touched more

deeply than we fancied by the things that were said this winter. Her manner is often queer and nervous, with a way of catching herself up she has lately taken to—breaking off her sentences and fretting her lip or hand. I wish at times I had never come back. If I had stayed up last Christmas to read, as I thought of doing, there would have been nothing for people to talk of. Now I certainly shall not think of reading for a degree. Perhaps I may go abroad, with Harewood if I can get no one else. He is the sort of fellow to go anywhere, and make himself rather available than otherwise, in case of worry.

Tenez, I suppose I may as well say what I meant to begin upon at once, without shirking or fidgeting. Well, you were right enough about my staying after you left; it did lead to scenes. In a quiet way, of course; subdued muffled-up scenes. I was reading to her once, and Cheyne came in; she grew hot, not very red, but hot and nervous, and I caught the feeling of her; he wanted us to go on, and, as we began talking of other things, left us rather suddenly. We sat quiet for a little, and then somehow or other found ourselves talking about you—I think *à propos* of Cheyne's preferences; and she laughed over some old letter of Lady Midhurst's begging her to take care of Redgie Harewood, and prevent his getting desperately

in love with you. I said Lady M. always seemed to me to live and think in a yellow-paper French novel cover, with some of the pages loose in sewing; then A. said there was a true side to that way of looking at things. So you see we were in the thick of sentiment before we knew it. And she is so very beautiful to my thinking; that clear pale face and full eyebrows, well apart, making the eyes so effective and soft, and her cheeks so perfect in cutting. I cannot see the great likeness of feature to her brother that people talk of; but I believe you are an admirer of his. It was after this that the dim soft patronizing manner of Cheyne's which I was referring to began to show itself, or I began to fancy it. We used to get on perfectly together, and he was never at all *gracious* to me till just now, when he decidedly is.

Make Radworth come up to London before you go to Portsmouth or Ryde, or wherever it is. And do something or other in the Ashton Hildred direction, for I am certain by things I heard Amicia say, that Lady Midhurst "means venom." So lay in a stock of antidotes. I wish there was a penal colony for women who outlive a certain age, unless they could produce a certificate of innocuous imbecility.

IX

LADY MIDHURST TO LADY CHEYNE

Ashton Hildred, *March 18th.*

So you have made a clear house of them all, my dear child, and expect my applause in consequence? Well, I am not sure you could have done much better. And Cheyne is perfect towards you, is he? That is gratifying for me (who made the match) to hear of, but I never doubted him. As for the two boys, I should like to have them in hand for ten minutes; they seem to have gone on too infamously. I retire from the field for my part; I give up Redgie; he must and will be eaten up alive, and I respect the woman's persistence. *Bon appétit!* I bow to her, and retire. She has splendid teeth. I suppose she will let him go some day? She can hardly think of marrying him when Ernest Radworth is killed off. If I thought she did, I would write straight to Captain Harewood. Do you think the Radworth has two years' vitality left him?

I am too old to appreciate your state of mind

as to your cousin. You know, too, that I have a weakness for clear accurate accounts, and your style is of the vaguest. It is impossible you can be so very foolish as to become *amourachée* of a man in any serious sense. Remember, when you write in future, that I shall not for a second admit that idea. Married ladies, in modern English society, *cannot* fail in their duties to the conjugal relation. Recollect that you are devoted to your husband, and he to you. I assume this when I address you, and you must write accordingly. The other hypothesis is *impossible* to take into account. As to being in love, frankly, I don't believe in it. I believe that stimulant drinks will intoxicate, and rain drench, and fire singe; but not in any way that one person will fascinate another. Avoid all folly; accept no traditions; take no sentiment on trust. Here is a bit of social comedy in which you happen to have a part to play; act as well as you can, and in the style now received on the English boards. Above all, don't indulge in tragedy out of season. Resolve, once for all, in any little difficulty of life, that there *shall* be nothing serious in it; you will find it depends on you whether there is to be or not. Keep your head clear, and don't confuse things; use your reason—determine that, come what may, nothing shall happen of a nature to involve or em-

barrass you. As surely as you make this resolve and act on it, you will find it pay.

I must say I wish you had been more attentive to my hint with regard to your brother. Study of the Radworth interior, and the excitement (suppose) of a little counterplot, would have kept you amused and left you sensible. I see too clearly that that affair is going all wrong—I wish I saw as clearly how to bring it all right. Reginald is a hopeless specimen—I never saw a boy so fairly *ensorcelé*. These are the little pointless endless things that people get ruined by. Now if you would but have taken notice of things you might have righted the whole matter at once. If I could have seen you good friends with Clara I should have been content. But as soon as you saw there was no fear of her making an affair with your husband (or, if you prefer it, of his being tolerably courteous to her) you threw up your cards at once. At least you might have kept an eye on the remaining players; a little interest in their game would have given you something better to think about than Frank. As it is, you seem to have worked yourself into a sort of vague irritable moral nervousness which is not wholesome by any means.

I want you to go up to London for some little time, and see the season out. Encourage Cheyne's idea of public life; it is an admirable

one for both of you. The worst thing you could do would be to stay down at Lidcombe, and then (as you seem to think of doing) join your cousins again in some foolish provincial or continental expedition. I had hoped to have seen you and Clara pull together, as they say now, better than you do; I have failed in the attempt to make you; but at least, as it seems you two can have no real mutual influence or rational amicable apprehension of each other, I do trust you will not of your own accord put yourself in her way for no mortal purpose. Is it worth while meeting on the ground of mutual indifference? I recommend you on all accounts to keep away from both brother and sister.

Not that I underrate him, whatever you may think. I see he is a nice boy; very faithful, brave, and candid; with more of a clear natural stamp on him than I thought. The mother has left him enough of her quick blood and wit, and it has got well mixed into the graver affection and sense of honour that he inherits from our side. I like and approve him; but you must observe that all this does not excuse absurdities on either hand. Of course he is very silly; at his age a man must be a fool or nothing: by the *nothing* I mean a pedant either of the head or the heart species (avoid pedants of the heart

kind, by-the-way), or a *coquin manqué*. I have met the latter; Alfred Wandesford, your father's friend, was one of that sort at Frank's age; you know his book had made a certain false noise—gone off with a blank report—flashed powder in people's eyes for a minute; and, being by nature lymphatic and malleable at once, he assumed a whole sham suit of vices, cut out after other men's proportions, that hung flapping on him in the flabbiest pitiable fashion; but he meant as badly as possible; I always did him the justice, when he was accused of mere pasteboard sins and scene-painters' profligacy, to say that his wickedness was sincere but clumsy. It was something more than wickedness made to order. Such a man is none the less a rascal because he has not yet found out the right way to be a rascal, or even because he never does find it out, and dies a baffled longing scoundrel with clean hands. Wandesford did neither, but turned rational and became a virtuous and really fortunate man of letters, whom one was never sorry to see about: and I don't know that he ever did any harm, though he was rather venomous and vulgar. One or two of his things are still worth your reading.

Now, because Frank is neither a man of this sort nor of the pedant sort, but one with just the

dose of folly proper to his age, and that folly of rather a good kind, I want him not to get entangled in the way that would be more dangerous for him than for any other sort of young man. I wish to Heaven there were some surgical process discoverable by which one could annihilate or amputate sentiment. Passion, impulse, vice of appetite or conformation, nothing you can define in words is so dangerous. Without sentiment one would do all the good one did either by principle or by instinct, and in either case the good deed would be genuine and valuable. Sinning in the same way, one's very errors would be comprehensible, respectable, reducible to rule. But to act on feeling is ruinous. Feeling is neither impulse nor principle—a sickly, deadly, mongrel breed between the two—I hate the very word sentiment. The animalist and the moralist I can appreciate, but what, on any ground, am I to make of the sentimentalist?

Decide what you will do. Look things and people in the face. Give up what has to be given up; bear with what has to be borne with; do what has to be done. Remember that I am addressing you now with twenty years of the truest care and affection behind me to back up my advice. Remember that I do truly and deeply care about the least thing that touches

you. To me you are two; you carry your mother about you.

Let us see what your last letter really amounts to. You have seen a good deal of your cousin for the last six weeks, and are vaguely unhappy at his going. (Once or twice, I am to infer, there has been a touch of softer sentiment in your relations to each other.) Not, I presume, that either has dreamt of falling in love: but you live in a bad time for intimacies; a time seasoned with sentiment to that extent that you can never taste the natural flavour of a sensation. You were afraid of Clara too, a little; disliked her; left her to Cheyne or to Reginald, as the case might be (one result of which, by-the-by, is that I shall have to extricate your brother, half eaten, from under her very teeth); and let yourself be drawn, by a sort of dull impulse, without a purpose under it, towards her brother. Purpose I am, of course, convinced there was none on either side. I should like to have some incidents to lay hold of; but I am quite aware that incidents never do happen. I wish they did; anything rather than this gradual steady slide of monotonous sentiment down a groove of uneventful days. The recollection that you have not given me a single incident—nothing by way of news but a frightened analysis of feeling and record of sentimental experience—

makes me seriously uneasy. Write again and tell me your plans: but for Heaven's sake begin moving; get something done; engage yourself in some active way of amusement. Have done with the country and its little charities and civilities—at least for the present. London is a wholesomer and more reasonable home for you just now.

X

LADY MIDHURST TO LADY CHEYNE

Ashton Hildred, *April 6th.*

Well, I have been to London and back, my dear child, with an eye to the family complications, and have come to some understanding of them. When I wrote to you last month I was out of spirits, and no doubt very stupid and obscure. I had a dim impression of things being wrong, and no means of guessing how to get them right. Now, I must say I see no real chance of anything unfortunate or unpleasant. You must be cautious, though, of letting people begin to talk of it again. I have a project for getting both the boys well out of the way on some good long summer tour. Frank is very nice and sensible; I would undertake to manage him for life by the mere use of reasoning. As to Reginald, *c'est une tête fêlée;* it may get soldered up in ten years' time, but wants beating about first; I should like to break it myself. Actually, I had to encourage his verse-making

—pat that rampant young Muse of his on the back—and stroke him down with talk of publication till he purred under my fingers. It is a mercy there is that escape-valve of verse. I think between that and his sudden *engouement* for foreign politics and liberation campaigns, and all that sort of thing, he may be kept out of the worst sort of mess: though I know one never can count upon that kind of boy. I should quite like to enrol him in real earnest in some absurd legion of volunteers, and set him at the Quadrilateral with some scores of horrid disreputable *picciotti* to back him. I dare say he would fight decently enough if he were taken into training. Imagine the poor child in a red rag of a shirt, and shoeless, marching *au pas* over the fallen dynasties to the tune of a new and noisier Marseillaise! It would serve him right to get rubbed against the sharp edges of his theory; and if he were killed we should have a mad martyr in the family, and when the red republic comes in we might appeal to the Committees of Public Safety to spare us for the sake of his memory. His father would die of it, for one thing; I do think Redgie is fated to make him *crever* with rage and shame and horror; so you see I shall always have a weak side in the boy's favour. But if you knew how absurd all this recandescence of revolution in the young people of the day

seems to me! My dear Amy, I have known men who had been dipped in the old revolution:

> J'ai connu des vivants à qui Danton parlait.

You remember that great verse of Hugo's; I showed it to Reginald the last time he was declaiming to me on Italy, and confuted him out of the master's mouth. It is true of me, really; both my own father and my dear old friend, Mr. Chetwood, had been in Paris at dangerous times. They had seen the great people of the period, and the strange sights of it.

I have run off into all this talk about old recollections, and forgotten, as usual, my starting-point; I was thinking of the last interview I had with Reginald. But I suppose you want some account of my stay in London. You know I had your house to myself (it was excellent on Cheyne's part to renew his offer of lending it, and spare an ancient relative the trouble of asking you to get her the loan of it from him); and, as your father came up with me, I travelled pleasantly enough, though we had fearful companions. I rested for a day or two, and then called upon the Radworths. Ernest looks *fifty;* if he had the wit to think of it, I should say he must always have understated his real age. I have no doubt, though, he will

live for ages (I don't mean his reputation, but his bodily frame); unless, indeed, she poisons him—I am certain she would, if she durst. She herself looks older; I trust, in a year or two, she will have ceased to be at all dangerous, even for boys. We had a curious interview; not that day, but a week after. I saw Reginald next day; he is mad on that score, quite. I like to see such a capacity for craziness; it looks as if a man had some corresponding capacity for being reasonable when his time came. He never saw such noble beauty and perfection of grace, it appears; there is an incomparable manner about the least thing she does. She is gloriously good, too—has a power of sublime patience, a sense of pity, a royal forbearance, a divine defiance of evil, and various qualities which must ennoble any man she speaks to. To look at her is to be made brave and just; to hear her talk is a lay baptism, out of which the spirit of the auditor comes forth purged, with invulnerable armour on; to sit at her side is to become fit for the grandest things; to shake hands with her makes one feel incapable of a mean wish. Base things die of her; she is poisonous to them. All the best part of one, all that makes a man fit to live, comes out in flower at the sight of her eyes. Accepting these assertions as facts (remarkable perhaps, but indisputable), I desired to know

whether Ernest Radworth was my friend's ideal of the glorified man?—heroic as a martyr he certainly was, I allowed, in a passive way. If a passing acquaintance becomes half deified by the touch of her, I put it to him frankly, what must not her husband have grown into by this time, after six years of marriage? Reginald was of opinion that on him the divine influence must have acted the wrong way. The man being irredeemably bad, abject, stupid, there was nothing noble to be called out and respond to her. The only result, therefore, of being always close to the noblest nature created was, in men like him, a justly ordained increase of degradation. Those that under such an influence cannot kindle into the superhuman *must*, it seems, harden into the animal. This, Redgie averred, was his deliberate belief. Experience of character, study of life, the evidence of common-sense, combined to lead him unwilling to this awful inference. But then, how splendid was her conduct, how laudable her endurance of him, how admirable in every way her conjugal position! I suggested children. The boy went off into absolute incoherence. I could not quite gather his reasons, but it seems the absence of children is an additional jewel in her crown. He is capable of finding moral beauty in a hump, and angelic meaning in a twisted foot. And all

the time it is too ludicrously evident that the one point of attraction is physical. Her good looks, such as they are, lie at the bottom of all this rant and clatter. We have our own silly sides, no doubt; but I do think we should be thankful we were not born males.

After this specimen of the prevalent state of things I felt of course bound to get hold of her and hear what she had to say. She had a good deal. I always said she could talk well; this time she talked admirably. She went into moral anatomy with the appetite of sixty; and she is under thirty—that I admit. She handled the question in an abstract indifferent way wonderful to see. The whole thing was taken up on high grounds, and treated in a grand spirit of research—worthy of her husband. She did not even profess to regard Redgie as a brother—or friend. In effect she did not profess anything: a touch of real genius, as I thought at once. He amused her; she liked him, believed in him, admired his best points; altogether appreciated the value of such a follower by way of change in a life which was none of the liveliest. Not that she made any complaint; she is far too sharp to *poser à l'incomprise*. I told her the sort of thing was not a game permitted by the social authorities of the time and country; the cards would burn her fingers after another deal

or two. She took the hint exquisitely: was evidently not certain she understood, but had a vague apprehension of the thing meant; fell back finally upon a noble self-reliance, and took the pure English tone. The suggestion of any harm resulting was of course left untouched: such a chance as that we were neither of us called upon to face. The whole situation was harmless, creditable even; which is perfectly true, and that is the worst of it. As in most cases of Platonism, there is something to admire on each hand. And the existence of this single grain of sense and goodness makes the entire affair more dangerous and difficult to deal with. She is very clever to manage what she does manage, and Reginald is some way above the run of boys. At his age they are usually made of soft mud or stiff clay.

When we had got to this I knew it was hopeless dissecting the matter any further, and began talking of things at large, and so in time of her brother and his outlooks. She was affectionate and hopeful. It seems he has told her of an idea which I encouraged; that of travelling for some months at least. How tenderly we went over the ground I need not tell you. Clara does not think him likely to be carried off his feet for long. Console yourself, if you want the comfort; we have no thought of marrying him. He is

best unattached. At the present writing he no doubt thinks more of you than *she* would admit. I regret it; but he does. Do you, my dear child, take care and keep out of the way just now. I hear (from Ernest Radworth; his wife said nothing of it; in fact, when he began speaking the corners of her mouth and eyelids flinched with vexation—just for a breath of time) that there is some talk now of a summer seaside expedition. Redgie of course; Frank of course; the Radworths, and you two. I beg you not to think of it. Why on earth should you all lounge and toss about together in that heavy way? You are off to London at last, or will be in ten days' time, you say; at least, before May begins. Stay there till it breaks up; and then go either north or abroad. Yachts are ridiculous, and I know you will upset yourself. To be sure sentiment can hardly get mixed into the situation if you do. The *soupir entrecoupé de spasmes* is not telling in a cabin; you sob the wrong way. Think for a second of too literal heart-sickness. Cheyne is fond of the plan, it seems; break him of that leaning. He and Redgie devised it at Lidcombe, Ernest says (he has left off saying Harewood; not the best of signs; *fœnum habet*—never mind how tied on; if he does go mad we will adjust it; but I forgot I never let you play at Latin. Rub out this for me; I never erase, as

you know, it whets and frets curiosity; and I can't begin again).

Frank, when I saw him, pleased me more than I had hoped. I made talk to him for some time; he is unusually reticent and rational; a rest and refreshment after that insane boy whom we can neither of us drive or hold as yet (but I shall get him well in hand soon, *et puis gare aux ruades!* Kick he will, but his mouth shall ache and his flanks bleed for it). No display or flutter of any kind; a laudable, peaceable youth, it seems to me. Very shy and wary; would not open up in the least at the mention of you: talked of his sister very well indeed. I see the points of resemblance now perfectly, and the sides of character where the likeness breaks down. He is clever as well as she, but less rapid and loud; the notes of his voice pleasant and of a good compass, not various. I should say a far better nature; more liberal, fresher, clearer altogether, and capable of far more hard work. Miss Banks comes out in both their faces alike, though corrected of course by John, which makes her very passable.

Is there much more to say? As you must be getting tired again, I will suppose there is not. Will you understand if I suggest that in case of any silent gradual breach beginning between Cheyne and Frank, you ought to help it to

widen and harden in a quiet wise way? I think you ought. I don't mean a coolness; but just that sort of relation which swings safe in full midway between intimacy and enmity. We all trust, you know, that he is never to be the heir; you must allow us to look for the reverse of that. Then, don't you see for yourself, it must be best for him to get a good standing for himself on his own ground, and not hover and *flicker* about Lidcombe too much? I know my dear child will see the sense of what I say. Not, I hope and suppose, that she needs to see it on her own account. Good-night, dearest; be wise and happy: but I don't bid you trouble your head overmuch with the heavy hoary counsels of Your most affectionate,

H. M.

XI

REGINALD HAREWOOD TO MRS. RADWORTH

London, *April 15th*.

You promised me a letter twice; none has come yet. I want the sight of your handwriting more than you know. Sometimes I lie all night thinking where you are, and sometimes I dare not lie down for the horror of the fancy. If I could but entreat and pray you to come away —knowing what I do. Even if I dared hope the *worst* of all was what it cannot be—a hideous false fear of mine—I could hardly bear it. As it is I am certain of one thing only in the world, that this year cannot leave us where the last did. If I must be away from you, and if you must remain with him, I cannot pretend to live in the way of other men. It is too monstrous and shameful to see things as they are and let them go on. Old men may play with such things if they dare. We cannot live and lie. You are brave enough for any act of noble justice. You told me once I knew you to the heart, and ought to give up dreaming and hop-

ing—but I might be sure, you said, of what I had. I do know you perfectly, as I love you: but I hope all the more. If hope meant anything ignoble, could I let it touch on you for a moment? I look to you to be as great as it is your nature to be. It is not for myself—I am ashamed to write even the denial—that I summon you to break off this hideous sort of compromise you are living in. What you are doing insults God, and maddens men who see it. Think what it is to endure and to act as you do! I ask you what right you have to let him play at husband with you? You know *he* has no right; why should you have? Would you let him try force to detain you if your mind were made up? You are doing as great a wrong as that would be, if you stay of your own accord. Who could blame you if you went? Who can help blaming you now? I say you cannot live with him always. If I thought you could, could I think you incapable of baseness? and you know, I am certain you do in your inmost heart know, that you have shown me by clear proof how infinitely you are the noblest of all women. Do all prefer a brave and blameless sorrow, with the veil close over it, to a shameful sneaking happiness under the mask? There was a time when I thought I could have worn it if I had picked it up at your feet. The recollection makes me half mad

with shame. To have conceived of a possible falsehood in your face is degradation enough for me. Now that you have set me right (and I would give my life to show you how much more I have loved you ever since) I come to ask you to be quite brave. Only that. I implore you now to go without disguise at all. You cannot speak falsely, I know; but to be silent is of itself a sort of pretence. Speak, for Heaven's sake, that all who ever hear of you may adore you as I shall. Think of the divine appeal against wrong and all falsehood that you will be making!—a protest that the very meanest must be moved and transformed by. It is so easy to do, and so noble. Say why you go, and then go at once. Put it before your brother. Go straight to him when you leave the hateful house you are in. He is very young, I know, but he must see the greatness of what you do. Perhaps one never sees how grand such things are — never appreciates the reality of their greatness—better than one does at his age. I think boys see right and wrong as keenly as men do; he will exult that you are compelled to turn to him and choose him to serve you. As for me, I must be glad enough if you let me think I have taken any part in bringing about that which will make all men look upon you as I do —with a perfect devotion of reverence and love.

I believe you will let me see you sometimes. I would devote my whole life to Radworth—give up all I have in the world to him. Even *him* I suppose nothing could comfort for the loss of you; but if it ought to be? At least we would find something to do. I entreat you to read this, and answer me. There can be but one answer. I wish to God I knew what to do that you would like done, or how to say what I do know—that I love you as no woman ever has been loved by any man. What to call you or how to sign this, I cannot think. I am afraid to write more.

R. E. H.

XII

MRS. RADWORTH TO REGINALD HAREWOOD

Blocksham, *April 28th.*

MY DEAR COUSIN:

ONE word at starting. I must not have you think I feel obliged to answer you at all. I do write, as you see; but not because I am afraid of you. And I am not going to pretend you put me out. You shall not see me *crane* at the gaps. Your fences are pretty full of them. Seriously, what can you mean? What you want, I know. But how can you hope I am to listen to such talk? Run away from nothing? I see no sort of reason for changing. You take things one says in the oddest way. I no more mean to leave home because Ernest and I might have more in common, than I should have thought of marrying a man for his *beaux yeux* or for a title. I hate hypocrisy. You are quite wrong about me. Because I am simple and frank, because I like (for a change) things and people with some movement in them, you take me for a sort of tied-up tigress, a woman of the Sand

breed, a prophetess with some dreadful mission of revolt in her, a trunk packed to the lid with combustibles, and labelled with the proof-mark of a new morality: not at all. I am neither oppressed nor passionate. I don't want delivering in the least. One would think I was in the way of being food for a dragon. Even if I were, how could you get me off? We are born to what we bear; I read that and liked it, a day since, in de Blamont's last book. I mean to bear things. We all make good pack-horses in time: I shall see you at the work yet. Suppose I have to drudge and drag. Suppose I am fast to the rock with a beast coming up "out of the sad unmerciful sea." Better women live so, and so they die. Can you kill my beast for me? I suspect not. It is not cruel. It means me no great harm: but you it will be the ruin of. It feeds on the knight rather than his lady. Do you pass by. Be my friend in a quiet way, and always. I shall be gratefuller for a kind thought of yours than for a sheer blow. The first you can afford; the last hardly. All good-will and kindly feeling does give comfort and a pleasure to natural people who are not of a bad make to begin with. I am glad of any, for my part: and take it when I can. What more could you do for me? What better could I want? Can you change me my life from the opening of it? It

began before yours was thought of; you know I am older; have been told how much, no doubt; something perhaps a thought over the truth—what matter?

I will tell you what I would have done, and would do, if I could. I would begin better; I would be richer, handsomer, braver, nicer to look at and stay near, pleasanter to myself. I would be the first woman alive, and marry the first man: not an Eve though, nor Joan of Arc or Cleopatra, but something new and great. I would live more grandly than great men think. I should have all the virtues then, no doubt. I would have all I wanted, and the right and the power to feel reverence and love and honour of myself into the bargain. And my life and death should make up "a kingly poem in two perfect books." That would be something better than I can make my life now. I dare say I might have had a grander sort of man for my companion than I have (a better I think hardly); but then I might have been born a grander sort of woman. There is no end to all that, you see. I am very well as I am; all the better that I have good friends.

I began as lightly as I could, and said nothing of your tone of address and advice being wrong or out of place; but now you will let me say it was a little absurd. Your desire seems to be that,

because I have not all I might have (whereas I also am not all I might be), I should leave my husband and live alone, in the cultivation of noble sentiments and in vindication of female freedom and universal justice. How does it sound to you now? I do not ask you if such a proposal ever was made before. I do not even ask you if it ought ever to be listened to. I make no appeal to the opinions of the world. I say nothing of the immediate unavoidable consequences. Suppose I can go, and (on some grounds) ought to go. Are there not also reasons why I ought to stay? Reflect for a minute on results. Think, and decide for yourself whether I could leave Ernest. For no cause. Just because I *can* leave him, and like to show that I *know* I can. I ask you, is that base or not? I should be disgracing him, spoiling his life and his pleasure in it, and using my freedom to comfort my vanity at the cost of his just self-esteem and quiet content; both of which I should have robbed him of at once. I will do no such thing. I will not throw over the man who trusted and respected me—loved me in a way—gave me the care of his life. When he married me he reserved nothing. I have been used generously; I have received, at all events, more than I have given. I wish, for my own sake chiefly, that I had had more to give him.

But what I have given, at least I will not take away.

No, we must bear with the realities of things. We are not the only creditors. Something is due to all men that live. How much of their due do you suppose the greater part of them ever get? Was it not you who showed me long ago that passage in Chalfont's "Essays" where he says— I have just looked it out again; my copy has a slip of paper at the page with your initials on it.

"You are aware the gods owe you something, which they have not paid you as yet— all you have received at their hands being hitherto insufficient? It appears also that you can help yourself to the lacking portion of happiness. Cut into the world's loaf, then, with sharp bread-knife, with steady hand; but at what cost? Living flesh as sensitive of pain as yours, living hearts as precious as your heart, as capable of feeling wrong, must be carved and cloven through. Their blood, if you dare spill it for your own sake, doubtless it shall make you fat. They, too, want something; take from them all they have, and you shall want nothing. At this price only shall a man become rich even to the uttermost fulness of his desire, that he shall likewise become content to rob the poor."

Ah, after the reading of such words as those, can we turn back to think of our own will and

pleasure? Dare we remember our own poor wants and likings? I might be happier away from here; what then, my dear cousin? I might even respect myself more, feel more honourable; and this, no doubt, is the greatest personal good one can enjoy or desire: but can I take from the man who relies on me the very gift that I covet for myself? A gift, too, this one, which all may win and keep who are resolved not to lose it by their own fault. I, for one, Reginald, will not throw it away; but I will not rob others to heighten my relish of it with the stolen salt of their life. Do you remember that next bit?

"And suppose now that you have eaten and are full; digesting gravely and gladly the succulence and savour of your life. Is this happiness that you have laid hold of? Look at it; one day you will have to look at it again; and other eyes than yours will. The terror of a just judgment is this that it *is* a just one. The sting of the sentence is that you, your own soul and spirit, must recognize and allow that it is rightly given against you. Fear not the other eyes, not God's nor man's, if what is done remain right for ever in your own. Few, even among cowards, are really afraid of injustice. The meanest of them are afraid mainly of that which does at first sight look just. But is this right in your eyes, to have cut your own share out of the

world in this fashion? But what sort of happiness, then, is this that you have caught hold of? The fairest, joyfullest, needfullest thing created is fire; and the fist that closes on it burns. Let go, I counsel you, the bread of cunning and violence, the sweet sources of treason and self-seeking; there are worse ends than the death of want. A soul poisoned is worse off than a starved soul."

You used to praise this man to me, saying there was no grander lover of justice in the world. Surely to such a writer liberty and truth are as dear as to you or me: and this is what he admires. An American too, as he says himself, fed with freedom, full of the love of his own right; but all great men would say as he says, and all good men would do so. I shall try at least. "There is an end of time, and an end of the evil thereof: and when joy is gone out of thee, then shall not thy sorrow endure for long. Nevertheless thou sayest, grief shall remain with me now that I have made an end of my pleasure; but grief likewise shall not abide with thee. For before the beginning a little sorrow was ordained for thee, and also a very little pleasure; but there is nothing of thine that endureth for ever."

Do you know where I found that? In a book of my husband's, the "Sayings of Aboulfadir,"

in a collection of translations headed "The Wise Men of the East." You see I am growing as philosophic as need be, and as literary. We know better than that last sentence, but is not the rest most *true?* You will forgive my preacher's tone; it was hopeless trying to answer such a letter as you wrote me in a sustained light manner.

I hope you are not put out with me; I may say, in ending, how sorry I should be for that. You must find other things to think of, without forgetting and throwing over old friendship. "Plenty of good work feasible in the world somehow," says your friend. For my poor little part, I have just to hold fast to what I have, and at least forbear doing harm. Again I ask you to forgive me if this letter has hurt you anywhere. Of course *you* can *never* show it. Farewell.

XIII

FRANCIS CHEYNE TO LADY CHEYNE

London, *May 7th.*

I HAVE read your letter twice over carefully, and cannot see why we should alter our plans. My sister, I know, counts upon you. But I can imagine from what quarter the objection comes: and I hardly like to think you will let it act upon you in this way. Indeed, I for one have promised your brother to meet him half-way, on the understanding that we were all to be at Portsmouth or Ryde together. He for one would be completely thrown out, if our project were to break up. Is Lord Cheyne tired of the plan, do you think? If so, I suppose there is no more to say. You speak so uncertainly of "having to give it up," and "not being sure of the summer," that I have perhaps missed out some such hint. Of course a word must be enough for us; but I fear it will not be easy to get over Reginald. He is hot on the notion; I think he must have a touch of the sea-fever. In our school-days he used to bewail

his fate in being cut off from the sea as a profession.

May 8th.

I left off yesterday because I wanted to go on differently. Now, as I mean to finish this and send it off at all hazards, I must speak out once for all. I do not think you can mean to break with all our hopes and recollections, and change the whole look of life for me. I do not suppose you have more regard for me than for any other kinsman or chance friend. And I do not appeal to you on the score of my own feeling. You are no coward to be afraid of words, or of harmless things—I can say safely, that if I could die to save you trouble or suffering I should thank God. I love nothing seriously that does not somehow belong to you; all that does not seems done in play, or to get the time through. But I am not going to plead with you on this ground. I ask nothing of you; if you were to die to-night I should still have had more than my fair share of luck in life. If I am to see you again, I can only be as glad of it as I am now, when I think of you. I cannot understand why I should not have this too to be glad of. What can people say, as things are?—unless, indeed, there were to be a change of appearances. Then they might get vicious, and talk idiocy. But you know what I shall do.

It is not I who have to set you right: we neither of us want stupid words or anything like the professional clack of love.

I think sometimes you might come to care for me a little more. I know you detest *that*. Perhaps the last word above had no business where it came in. I remember your way of saying what things you hated.

I see Reginald often now; I suppose he is all right. I am fond of him, but don't envy his way of taking things. I like to look at him and make out why he is thought so like you: and, I think, when he is with me he talks more of you than he used. I can hardly think he is older than I am when I see how much less he knows or feels of one thing.

May 9th.

I have let this lie over another day. I have nothing to say but that I *can* say nothing. When I begin to write, I seem to hear you speaking. I believe at times I can tell, by the sensation, what you are doing at Lidcombe. I have heard you speak twice since I sat down, and I know the dress you have on. Do not write unless you want. I can see how you will take this. I cannot help it, you understand. There is Reginald's knock; but this shall go to-day, and I will not touch it again.

XIV

LADY MIDHURST TO REGINALD HAREWOOD

Ashton Hildred, *May 12th.*

My Dear Boy:

You are, without exception, the best fun I know. I have been laughing for the last two hours over your letter and its enclosure. You are not to fly out at me, mind; I regard you with all just esteem, I think all manner of good things of you, but you *are* fun, you will allow. Old friends may remark on such points of character, and yet draw no blood.

Now, my dear Redgie, what do you think I got by post exactly three days before this epistle of yours, with Clara's valuable bit of English prose composition so neatly inserted? I am humane, and will not let your brains tingle with curiosity for a minute. I got *this;* a note (not ill worded by any means) from my affectionate and anxious niece, C. R., enclosing your last letter to her. She threw herself upon me (luckily the space between us softened the shock of her weight, enabling me to bear up) with *full*

confidence and gratitude. I could explain and advise; I could support and refresh. I was to say whether she were right or not. To Mr. Radworth she could not turn for sustenance or counsel. Ought a wife to—would a wife be justified if she did—do so and so? Through all this overture to her little performance one could hear thrill the tone of British matronhood, tremulously strong and tenderly secure. I did think it was all over with some of you, but found rapid relief. She put it to me; was she to notice it? Was she to try to bring you to reason, appealing to the noble mismanaged nature of you? Could she treat your letter as merely insulting or insane? My private answer came at once—Decidedly she could not; but I never wrote it down—it went off in a little laugh, quietly. She wound up with an intimation that I was thus taken into confidence in order to give me a just and clear idea of *her* conduct and position; this she owed to herself (the debt was well paid, and I receipted it by return of post), but she would rather say as little of your folly as she could avoid. Of course, she put it twice as prettily, and in a very neat, soft way; but I give you the real upshot. She understood—Clara, you see, did—that I felt warmly and fondly towards you; she was aware that I could not but know the way in which your conduct

would affect her, Clara; and on your account, on mine (by no means, I need not say, on her own), she now felt—various things in the sensation line eminently creditable to her.

I drew breath after this, and then laid hold of your letter. It did not upset me, you will like to hear; indeed, I compliment you on such a "selfless" and stainless form of devotion. You play Launcelot in a suit of Arthur's armour—or rather in his new clothes after the well-known cut of modern tailordom, which I grieve to see are already cast wear, or how should you come by them? The vividness and loftiness of view throughout is *idyllic*. In effect, considering your heat of head and violence of sentiment, I think you behave—and write—nicely, nobly even, if you like to be told so. It is right you should take things in the way you do, now you are first plunged into them. I am glad you do persuade yourself of the justice and reality of your passionate paradoxes and crude conceptions about social rights and wrongs. Naturally, being in love, like the bad specimen you are, you find institutions criminal, and revolt desirable. It is better, taking your age into account, than trying to sneak under shelter of them within reach of the forbidden fruit. Storm the place if you can, but no shooting behind walls; a good plan for you, as I am glad you see.

Altogether, if you are cracked, I should say you have no unsound side; a fool you may be, but you get through your fooleries like a gentleman. *You* are "brave enough" too, as you said; it was no coward's letter, that one. I should not forgive you otherwise; but I was always sure, so far, of my old Redgie—you never had any of the makings of a coward about you. I like the hopeless single-sighted daring of your proposals; also your way of feeling what disgrace would be. Except in the vulgarest surface fashion, she, for one, will never understand that—never get to see the gist of your first few lines, for instance, as I do; but don't you get on that ground again, my dear boy. I like you all the better; and that has nothing to do with it, you see. In a word—allow that you were outside of all reason in writing the letter, and I will admit you have kept well inside the lines of honour. So far, there is nothing to forgive (which is *tant soit peu* lowering), and not much to punish (which is at worst painful). There is a school copy for you; make me an exercise in C.'s style on that head.

So much for you; now for her side; and I do beg you to read this patiently, and do me justice as far as you can. You send me her answer to your letter in a rapture of admiration, with a view of altering and ennobling my estimate of her, which you know to be hitherto of a

moderate kind. I am to read and kindle, acknowledge and adore. Is she not noble? Let us see. Ought we not to do honour to such grand honesty and purity, such a sublime goodness? I am not over sure. You write to me as to your first best friend (and effectively, my dear old child, I don't think you have a better one—I do feel *parental* on your score), wishing to set my mistakes right and bring me to an equitable and generous tone of mind: you do me the honour to think me capable of conversion, worthy to worship if I did but see the altar as it really stands. Being such as I am, I cannot but appreciate greatness and high devotion if I can but be brought face to face with them. That I think is what you mean, or rather what you had floating in your head when you wrote to me. Well, we must hope you were right. I am no doubt flattered; and will try to be deserving. Then, I must now see things as you do, and admit the sublimities of behaviour you have made out in C. R. to be real discoveries, and not flies in your telescope. Her noble letter to you —a letter so fearless of misconception, so gently worded, so devoted, and so just—must compel me to allow this much. Wait; you shall have my poor verdict as to that by-and-by.

But now, what have you to say about her letter to me? Why do you suppose she sends

me your epistle to her? I should like to know. To me, honestly, it does seem like a resolution to be quit of all personal damage, or risk, or other moral discomfort; also it does seem very like a keen apprehension—very laudably keen—of a chance given her to right herself, or to raise herself in my judgment, by submitting the whole matter to me. I, as arbitress, must decide, on receiving such an appeal from her, backed by such proofs, that she had gone on splendidly—was worthy of all manner of praise—and that you, as a crazy boy in the "salad days" of sentiment, were alone blameworthy. Now, frankly, do you believe she had any other meaning? Why need she appeal to me at all? Certainly I am her nearest female relation. *Après?* And we have always been on the nicest terms. What then? There was no call for her to refer to anybody. She is old enough, at all events (and *that* she will hardly deny, or insinuate a denial of), to manage by herself for herself. Do you imagine she wrote on your account; applied to me for your sake? I do not. How could I help her? How could I settle you? Favour me by considering that. One thing I could do, and that she knew well enough. I could change my mind as to her (she was always clever enough to know what my honest opinion of her was) and prevent, by simply expressing approval, if not

applause, of her, any chance of annoyance she might otherwise have run the risk of. Do you see? it was no bad stroke; just the kind of sharpness you know I always gave her credit for. Very well played too by forwarding me your letter; she was aware I should hardly have relied on extracts or summaries of her making, and was not such a fool as to appeal to me in a vague virtuous way. Upon the whole, as it seemed to her, she could not fail to come out admirably from the test in my eyes. I confess, for the sort of woman, she is far-sighted and sharp-sighted. Only, there is one thing to be taken into account; that I have known both her and you since you were the tiniest thinking animals possible. She was not hard upon you; not in the least. I was to draw all the inferences for myself.

And now for her letter to you. Luckily I had read all this before I came to it. And after all I am surprised; not admiringly by any means. I looked for better of her, considering. As she could not decently assume alarm and anger, and was not the woman to write in the simple Anglican fashion, you see there was nothing for it but to mix audacity with principle. She begins fairly on that score: the opening is not bad. But how could you swallow the *manner?* Was there ever such a way of writing? The chaff,

as you others call it, is so poor, so ugly and paltry—the tone of rebuke such a dead failure; the air of sad satisfaction so ill put on; the touches of sentiment so wretchedly coloured. I wonder she could do no better; she gets up her effects with trouble enough, and is not a fool. As to the magnanimous bits—I do really want to know if it has *never* crossed your mind for a second that they were absolute impertinences? Were you *quite* taken in by that talk about "man who trusted and respected," "just self-esteem," "used generously," and such like? "Received more than she has given"! "Not the only creditor"!—why, my poor boy, I tell you again she married the man tooth and nail; took him as a kite takes a chaffinch. Certainly he wanted her; but as to having wind enough to run her down! It upsets me to write about it. Throw him over! It is perfect impudence to imagine she can make any living creature above twelve suppose that regard for Ernest keeps her what one calls a good wife. She looks it when you come upon them anywhere. But your age has no eyes. Sense of duty?—she cares for the duties and devotions no more than I should care for her reputation if she were not unhappily my relative. It is a grievous thing to see you taking to such a *plat d'argot réchauffé*. For pure street slang it is, not even the jargon of a ra-

tional society. Do you know what ruin means? or compromise even? And she is not the woman, by nature or place, to risk becoming *tarée* in the slightest degree. She is thoroughly equable and cautious, beyond a certain point. The landmark is a good bit on this side of serious love-making; hardly outside the verge of common sentiment. I assure you there is nothing to be made of her in any other way. She will keep you on and off eternally to no further purpose.

Upon the whole I don't know that her letter could well have been a worse piece of work than it is. Why, if you would but observe it, she runs over into quotation before she gets a good start; and I never saw this modern fashion of mournful, satirical, introspective writing more ungraciously assumed. Her sad smiles *crack*, and show the enamel. You know how an old wretch with her face *glazed* looks if she ventures to laugh or cry? at least you can imagine if you will think of me with a coating of varnish on my cheeks and lips, listening to you for five minutes. Well, just in the same way the dried paint of her style *splits* and spoils the whole look of her letter at the tender semi-rident passages. It is too miserably palpable. Don't you see her trying to write up to tradition?—say what she has to say in the soft pungent manner she thinks

proper to her part as a strong-minded, clear-headed, somewhat *rapid* humourist (don't suppose I meant to write *vapid*), with a touch of the high-minded unpretentious social martyr? I must tell you a bit of verse I kept thinking of while I ran over this epistle of hers—Musset, you know—

> Triste! oh, triste en vérité!
> —Triste, abbé? Vous avez le vin triste?

If you had but the wit to take it in that way, and answer her accordingly! *Elle a l'amour triste*, like most of her sort. For you must allow she is making love, though in the unpractical way. If I could but see an end of this dolorous kind of verbal virtue and compromised sentiment—this tender tension of the moral machine, worse for the nerves than the headiest draughts of raw sensation! But it all comes of your books; I thank Heaven we were reared on sounder stuff. Confess that her American sermons were too much for you. As for Aboulfadir, I never was so nearly hysterical since the decease of your grandfather. I *actually saw her* looking out the bit. And your initials on the slip of paper, you remember? Oh, you utter idiot!

Allow me one more question before you tear me up. Has it yet struck you what her last

words *mean?* "You can *never* show this"; that is, in Heaven's name forward this to old Aunt Midhurst next time she writes spitefully about me. Now, Reginald, I will not have bad language. You know she meant that; the woman capable of inditing that letter must be capable of thinking it good enough to influence *any* reader, upset *any* prejudice. You were to send it (you must admit you did), and it was to complete the grand work of refutation begun a week before by her appeal to me on the occasion of *your* letter. Now, I do hope you see: it was really a passable stroke of wit. The whole thing was cooked with a view to its being served up stewed in the same sauce. No doubt, after the great conception, her brain swelled with the sense of supreme diplomacy. Perhaps a man might have been taken in. Evidently a boy was. For my part I think it personally insulting to have supposed my opinion of her was to be affected by such a cheap specimen of the scene-shifter's professional knack. I see as well as ever how she wants to play her hand out.

I give you a month, my dear boy, to get over your rage at me; then I shall expect you to behave equably. Till that time I suppose I must let you "chew the thrice-turned cud of wrath." Otherwise I should beg you not to make one of the south-coast party I hear of.

Also, if you did go, to stick close to your sister. As it is, I see you will join the rest, and waste your time and wits, besides sinking chin-deep in Platonic sloughs of love. Some day I may succeed in pulling you out. I dare say it ought to be a comfort to me to reflect that you are doing no great harm; dirtier you might get, but scarcely wetter. The quagwater of sentiment will soak you to the bone. In earnest, if you go to Portsmouth or elsewhere with the Cheynes, you are to let me hear now and then. I hope there is enough love or liking between us two to stand a little sharp weather between whiles. Even though I *am* unbearably vicious and shamefully stupid with regard to your cousin, you ought to try and overlook it. Recollect my age, I entreat you. Can you expect sound judgment and accurate relish of the right thing from such an old critic as I am? You might as well hope to make me see her beauty with your eyes as appreciate her goodness in your fashion. And then, bad as I may be, we have been friends too long to break off. If I had ever had a son in my younger years things would have gone differently; as it was, I have always had to put up with you instead. A bad substitute you make, too; but somehow one gets used to that. If I could have taken you with me from the first, and reared you under shelter of your mother

(nice work I should have had of it, by-the-by; but all *that* labour fell to your father's share), I would have broken you in better. I would, regardless of all expense in birch; though as to that the Captain did his duty to you liberally, I will say. When you were born I could not realize your mother's age to myself in the least; I myself was only thirty-eight (look me out in the dates, if you won't take my word for it), and I could not make her out old enough to have a son. Besides, I had always hungered after a boy. So I took to you from the beginning in an idiotic way, and by this time no doubt my weakness is developing into senile dotage. I don't say I always stood by you; but you must remember, my dear Redgie, I could not always. Your ill-luck was mine as to that, and your mother's too. I wish I could have kept by you when you did want some of us at hand; not that I suppose the softest-hearted boy feels deeply the want of a super-incumbent grandmother. Still, we should all have got on the better for it, I conceive. No doubt, too, I have not always done the best for you—only *my* best: but that I did always want to do. In a word, you know I love you as dearly as need be: and you may as well put up with me for fault of a better.

Take this into account when you feel furious,

and endeavour to make the best you can of me. I perceive this letter is running to seed, and my tattle fast lapsing into twaddle. After all, I don't suppose my poor shots at the pathetic will bring down much game of the sentimental kind. I might bubble and boil over with feeling long enough (I suspect) before you melted. Besides, what does it matter, I should be glad to know? However, I do trust you will be as good a boy as you can, and not bring me to an untimely grave in the flower of my wrinkles.

XV

LADY CHEYNE TO FRANCIS

Portsmouth. *May 28th.*

Do not write, and do not persist in trying to speak to me again. If you care for any of us, you will not stay here. I can do nothing. When my husband speaks to me, it turns me hot and sick with fear. I am ashamed of every breath I draw. If you cannot have mercy, do, for God's sake, think of your own honour. If you stay here, you may as well show this letter at once. I wish Cheyne would kill me. But, even if he saw what I am thinking of when I look at him, I believe he would not. He is so fearfully good to me. Oh, if I were to die, I should never forget that! I don't know that it matters much what I do. I have broken my faith to him in thought, and, if justice were done, I ought to be put away from him. I look at my hand while I write, and think it ought to be cut off—my ring burns. I cannot think how things can be as dreadful as they are. I suppose, if I can live through this, I shall live to see them become worse. If I

could but see what to do, I should be content with any wretchedness. I never meant to be a bad wife. When I woke this morning, I felt mad. People would say there was nothing to repent of; but I know. It is worse not to love him than it would be to leave him. What have you done to me? for I never lied and cheated till now. After such horrible falsehood and treason I don't see what crime is to stop me. If I had known that another woman was like me at heart I could not have borne to let her look at me. I feel as if I *must* go away and hide myself. If only something would give me an excuse for going home! At least, if I must stay with my husband, I implore you to leave me. Tell your sister you *must* go. Say you are tired. Or go to London to-morrow with Cheyne and don't return. You can so easily excuse yourself from the sailing party. He stays in town one night, and comes down in time for it the day after. You can make a pretext for remaining. If you have any pity, you will. I have nothing to help me in the world. It would kill me to appeal to Reginald. No one could understand. I am sure, if you knew how I do want and trust to be kept right, and what a fearful life I have of it with this sense of a secret wearing me out, you would be sorry for me. And if you love me so much, knowing what you

know now, you ought to be sorry. It is too late for me to get happy again, but I may come not to feel such unbearable shame as I do now, and shall while you stay. Promise you will not try to see me. I wonder if God will be satisfied, supposing you never do see me again? I shall have tried to be good. I think He ought to have pity on me, too. But, if I live to grow old, I shall want to see you then.

XVI

MRS. RADWORTH TO LADY MIDHURST

Portsmouth, *June 3d.*

You will have heard, my dear aunt, of our wretched loss, and the fearful bereavement of poor Amicia. I wish I could give a reassuring account of her, but she appears to be quite broken; it is miserable to see her. She sits for whole hours in her own room; I did hope at first it was to seek the consolation of prayer, but that comfort, I fear greatly, she is not yet capable of feeling. She looks quite like death. I suggested she should go into the room where he is lying, and take her last look of him, but she turned absolutely whiter than she was, shuddered, and seemed quite sick. My brother is hardly less overcome. On a servant addressing him yesterday by his title, he actually sank into a chair, and gave way in a manner which I could not but regret. I am certain he would sacrifice worlds to restore his cousin to life.

Mr. Harewood has been throughout most kind. He has done all that the best friend of

our poor child could do. Amicia will hardly see any one but him. Mr. Radworth offered to relieve him of some part of the wretched trouble and business he has undertaken to spare dear Amicia (Francis, I must tell you, seems incapable of moving); but he refuses to share it. I cannot express to you the admiration we all feel for his beautiful management of her, poor child. Who could remember at such a time the former folly which he must himself have forgotten? I am constantly reminded that you alone always did him justice.

I suppose you will wish to know the sad detail, and it had better perhaps be given at once by me than by another. We had decided, as you know, to take Saturday last as the day of our projected sail. Francis seemed curiously unwilling to go at first, and it was only at poor Lord Cheyne's repeated request that he assented. Amicia was very quiet, and I thought rather depressed—I have no doubt in consequence of the sudden reaction from a continued strain on her spirits. It was a very dull party altogether; only Mr. Harewood and poor Edmund seemed to have any spirits to enjoy it. They talked a great deal, especially about summer plans. Quite suddenly, we heard ahead what I fancied was the noise of the overfalls, and began passing out of smooth water. I thought it looked

dangerous, but they *would* put inshore. Feeling the waves run rapidly a little higher and higher, I said something to Amicia, who I knew was a bad sailor, and as she scarcely answered, but lay back in the boat, I feared the discomfort to her of rough water had begun. I stooped forward, as well as I remember, to sign to my husband to make Lord Cheyne look at her. Ernest, in his nervous absent way, failed to catch my meaning, and, in rising to speak to me, was pitched forwards with a jerk, and came full against Mr. Harewood, who was helping to shift a sail. Then I really saw nothing more but that the sail-yard (is it a yard they call the bit of wood a sail is tied to?[1]) swung round, and I screamed and caught hold of Amicia, and next second I saw poor Lord Cheyne in the water. He caught at Francis, who was next him, and missed. Mr. Harewood jumped in after him with his coat on, but he could hardly make the least way because of the ground swell. They had to pull him in again almost stifled and I feared insensible. Before I came to myself so as to see what anybody was doing, they had got the body on board and Francis and the sailors and Ernest were trying to revive it. Amicia, who was shaking

[1] Note (? by Lady Midhurst).—"Too ingenuous by half for the situation."

dreadfully, kept hold of her brother, chafing and kissing his face and hands. How we ever got back God knows. Amicia seemed quite stunned; she never so much as touched her husband's hand. When we came to get out, I thought Francis and my husband would have had to support her, but Mr. Radworth was *quite* useless, and poor Francis could not bear even to look at her misery. So Mr. Harewood (who was really unfit to walk himself) and one of the sailors had to carry her up to the house. The funeral takes place to-morrow; I trust my brother may be able to attend, but really he seems at times perfectly broken down in health and everything.

XVII

LADY MIDHURST TO LADY CHEYNE

Ashton Hildred, *June 6th.*

My Dearest Child:

I would not let your mother go, or she would have been with you before this. It *must* have done her harm. She is not well enough even to write; we have had to take her in hand. It is a bad time for us all; we must live it down as we best may. I thought of advising your father to be with you before the funeral, but *she* would hardly like him to leave her. I shall start myself to-morrow, and take you home with me. You had better not go to Lidcombe. With us you will at least have thorough quiet, and time to recover by degrees. Now no doubt you are past being talked to. I only hope those people do their best for you. It is well now that nothing ever came between poor Cheyne and you. I suppose you have had as quiet and unbroken a time since your marriage as any one ever does get. The change is sharp; all changes are that turn upon a death. I know, too, that he loved

you very truly, and was always good, just, and tender to all he knew; a man to be seriously and widely regretted. It may be that you are just now inclining to believe you will never get over the pain of such a loss. Now, in my life, I have lost many people and many things I would have given much to keep. I have repented and lamented much that I have done, and more that has happened to me—sometimes through my own fault. But one thing I do know, and would have you lay to heart—that nobody living need retain in his dictionary the word *irretrievable.* Strike it out, I advise you; I erased it from mine long ago. Self-reproach and the analysis of regret are most idle things. Abstain at least from confidences and complaints. Bear what you have to bear steadily, with locked teeth as it were. This minute may be even graver than you think. I know how expansion follows on the thaw of sudden sorrow. I am always ready to hear and help you to the best of my poor old powers; but, even to me, I would not have you overflow too much. I write in all kindness and love to you, my poor child, and I know my sort of counselling is harsh, heathen, mundane—I can hardly help your way of looking at it. No one is sorrier than I am; no one would give more to recall irrevocable things. But once again I assure you what cannot be recalled may be

retrieved. Only the retrieving must come from you: show honour and regard to Cheyne's memory by controlling and respecting yourself to begin with. If you have some floating desire to make atonement of any kind, atone in that way. But if you have any such feeling, there is a morbid nerve; you should labour to deaden it—by no means to stimulate.

I am more thankful than I can say that you have Reginald with you. The boy is affectionate, and not of an unhealthy nature. He ought to be of use and comfort; I am sure he is good for you. I can well believe you see no more of others than you can help. It was nice for me to hear from any quarter that Redgie had done his part well. There ought always to be a bond between you two. Family ties are invaluable—where they are anything: and neither of you could have a better stay in any time of need than the other. As to friendships of a serious nature (very deeply serious that is) between man and man, or between woman and woman, I have no strong belief in their existence—none whatever in their possible usefulness.

I shall be with you in two days at latest; will you understand if I ask you to wait for me? Till I come, do nothing for yourself; say nothing to anybody. For your mother's sake and mine, who have some claims to be thought of—I add

no other name; I don't want to appeal on any grounds but these; but you know why you should spare *her*. Restraint and reserve at present will be well made up to you afterwards. I can imagine you may want some one to lean upon; I dare say it is hard now to be shut up and self-reliant; but I would not on any account have you *expand* in a wrong direction. I could wish to write you a softer-toned letter of comfort than this; but one thing I must say: do not let your grief hurry you even for one minute beyond the reach of advice. As for comfort, my dearest child, what can I well say? I have always hated condolence myself: where it is anything, it is bad—helpless and senseless at best. A grievous thing has happened; we can say no more when all comment has been run through. To us for some time—I say to us, callous as you are now thinking me—the loss and misfortune will seem even greater than they are. You have the worst of it. Nevertheless, it is not the end of all things. The world will dispense with us some day; but it shall not while we can hold out. Things must go on when we have dropped off; but, while we can, let us keep up with life. These are cold scraps enough to feed regret with; but they are at least solid of their kind, which is more than I would say of some warmer and lighter sorts of moral diet.

As for what is called spiritual comfort, I would have you by all means take and use it, if you can get it, and if the flavour of it is natural to you: I know the way most people have of proffering and pressing it upon one; for my part I never pretended to deal in it. I know only what I think and feel myself; I do not profess to keep moral medicines on hand against a time of sickness. Heaven knows I would give much, or do much, or bear much, to heal you. But indeed at these times,when one must speak (as I have now to do), I prefer things of the cold sharp taste to the faint tepid mixtures of decocted sentiment which religious or verbose people serve out so largely and cheaply. I may be the worse comforter for this; but to me comments, either pious or tender, usually leave a sickly sense after them, as of some flat, unwholesome drug. I am not preaching paganism; I would have you seek all reasonable comfort or support wherever it seems good to you. But I for one cannot write or talk about hopes of reunion, better life, expiation, faith, and such other things. I believe that those who cannot support themselves cannot be supported. Those who say they are upheld by faith say they are upheld by a kind of energy natural to them. This I do entirely allow; and a good working quality it is. But any one who is utterly without self-reliance will

collapse. There can be nothing capable of helping the helpless. So you must be satisfied with the best I can give you in the way of comfort.

I see well enough that I am heathenish and hard. But I know your trouble is a great one, and I will not play with it. It would be easy to write after the received models, if the thing were not so serious. Time will help us; there is no other certain help. Some day when you are old enough to reconsider past sorrows you will admit that there was a touch of truth in my shreds of pagan consolation. Stoicism is not an exploded system of faith. It may be available still when resignation in the modern sense breaks down. Resign yourself by all means to the unavoidable; take patiently what will come; refuse yourself the relaxation of complaint. Have as little as you can to do with fear, or repentance, or retrospection of any kind. Fear is unprofitable; to look back will weaken your head. As to repentance, it never did good or undid harm. Do not persuade yourself either that your endurance of things that are is in any way a sacrifice of Christian resignation offered to the supreme powers. That is the unhealthy side of patience; the fortitude of the feeble. Be content to endure without pluming yourself on a sense of submission. For, indeed, submission without compulsion can

never be anything but the vicious virtue of sluggards. We submit because we must, and had better not flatter ourselves with the fancy that we submit out of goodness. If we could fight our fate we all would. It is not the desire to resist that we fail in, but the means; we have no fighting material. It would not be rebellion, but pure idiocy or lunacy, for us to begin spluttering and kicking against the pricks; but, on the other hand, that is no reason why we should grovel and blubber. It is a child's game to play at making a virtue of necessity. I say that if we could rebel against what happens to us we would rebel. Christian or heathen, no man would really submit to sorrow if he could help it. Neither you nor I would, and therefore do not try to believe you are resigned, as people call it, to God's will in the strict religious sense. For if submission means anything that a Stoic had not it means something that no one ever had or ought to have. Courage, taking the word how you will, I have always put at the head of the virtues. Any sort of faith or humility that interferes with it, or impairs its working power, I have no belief in.

But, above all things, I would have you always keep as much as you can of liberty. Give up all for that; sacrifice it to nothing—to no religious theory, to no moral precept. All

slavishness, whether of body or of spirit, leaves a taint where it touches. It is as bad to be servile to God as it is to be servile to man. Accept what you must accept, and obey where you must obey; but make no pretence of a "freewill offering." That sort of phrase and that sort of feeling I hold in real abhorrence. Weak people and cowards play with such expressions and sentiments just as children do with tin soldiers. It is their substitute for serious fighting; because they cannot struggle, they say and believe they would not if they could; most falsely. Give in to no such fancies: cherish no such forms of thought. Liberty and courage of spirit are better worth keeping than any indulgence in hope and penitence. I suppose this tone of talk is unchristian; I know it is wholesome though, for all that. God knows, our scope of possible freedom is poor and small enough; that is no reason why we should labour to circumscribe it further. We are beaten upon by necessity every day of our lives: we cannot get quit of circumstances; we cannot better the capacities born with us; all the less on that very account need we try to impair them. Because we are all purblind, more or less, must we pluck out our eyes to be led about by the ear? Is it any comfort, when we look through spectacles that show us nothing but shapeless blurs and

blots, to be told we ought to see clearly by their help, and must at least take it for granted that others do? Rather I would have you endure as much as you can, and hope for as little as you can. All wise and sober courage ends in that. Do, in Heaven's name, try to keep free of false hopes and feeble fears. Face things as they are; think for yourself when you think of life and death, joy and sorrow, right and wrong. These things are dark by the nature of them; it is useless saying they can be lit up by a candle held in your eyes. You are only the blinder; they are none the clearer. What liberty to act and think is left us, let us keep fast hold of; what we cannot have, let us agree to live without.

This is a strange funeral sermon for me to preach to you across a grave so suddenly opened. Only once or twice in the many years of one's life the time comes for speaking out, if one will see it—these are matters I seldom think over and never talk about, wishing to keep my head and eyes clear. But my mind was made up, if I did write to you, to keep back nothing I had to say, and affect nothing I had not to say. You are worth counsel and help, such as I can give; the occasion, too, is worth open and truthful speech. I do not pray that you may have strength sent you; you must take your own

share of work and endurance; you have to make your strength for yourself. I say again, time will help you, and we should survive this among other lamentable things. But for me, now that I have said my say and prayed my prayers over the dead, I shall not preach on this text again. What my love and thought for you can do in the way of honest help has been done. If you want more in this time of your danger and sorrow, you will not ask it of me. Suppose I were now dying, I could not add a word more to leave you by way of comfort or comment. For once I have written fully, and shown you what I really think and look for as to these matters. I shall never open up again in the same way to any one while I live. I have unpacked my bag for you; now I put it away for good, under lock and seal. When we meet, and as long as we live together, let us do the best we can in silence.

I add no message; all that would be said you know without that. It could only weaken you and sharpen the pain of the day to you to receive tender words and soft phrases copied out to no purpose. I have told your mother she had best not write—forgive me if you regret it. Indeed, I doubt whether she would have tried. When you are here, we must all manage to gain in strength and sense. If this letter of mine strikes cold upon your sorrow, I can but hope you may find,

in good time, something or some one able really to soothe and support you better than I can. Meantime, if you read it with patience, I hope it may help to settle you; save you from the useless self-torture of penitent perplexity and the misery of a petted retrospect; and lighten your head, at all events, of some worry, if it cannot just now affect you at heart for the better, as other comforters might profess to do. No one, to my thinking, can "help the heart"—wise phrase of a wiser poet than your brother ever will make.

There, I suppose, you must suffer at present. How things are to go with us later on, I cannot say or see. But while you live, and whatever you do, believe at least in the love I have for you.

XVIII

LADY MIDHURST TO FRANCIS CHEYNE

Ashton Hildred, *July 28th.*

MY DEAR FRANK:

I WOULD not have you write to Amicia about those minor arrangements you speak of. Matters had better be settled with me, or by means of your sister. We know you will do all you can in the best possible way; and she is not yet well enough to bear worry. I fear, indeed, that she has more to bear physically than we had thought of. She keeps getting daily more white and wretched, and we hardly know how to handle her. When she arrived, she had a sort of nervous look of strength, which begins now to fail her completely; spoke little, except to me, but fed and slept like a *rationally* afflicted person. Now I see her get purplish about the eyes, and her cheeks going in perceptibly. It will take years to set her straight if this is to go on. She is past all medicine of mine. I dare say she will begin to develope a spiritual tendency—she reads the *unwholesomest* books. The truth

is, she is far too young to be a widow. That grey and cynical condition of life sits well only upon shoulders of thirty or forty. She is between shadow and sun, in the dampest place there is. Mist and dew begin to tell upon her brain: there is the stuff of a conversion in her just now. I tell you this because you have known her so well, and were such good friends with her that you will be able to take my meaning. I am sure you do want to hear, and sincerely wish all things right with her again. I hope they may be in time—we must take them as they are now. Meantime, it is piteous enough to see her. She comes daily to sit with me for hours, and has a way of looking up and sighing between whiles which is grievous to me. Again, at times, I seem to have glimpses of some avowal or appeal risen almost to her lips, and as suddenly resigned. Her words have tears in them somehow, even when she talks *peaceably*. I had no suspicion of so deep or keen a regard on her part. Our poor Edmund can hardly have given her as much, one would say. But who knows what he had in him? He was strange always, with his gentle cold manner, and had rare qualities. "I forget things," she said one day on a sudden to me—I never know what she does think of. Another time, "I wish one could see backwards."

I am glad you went at once to Lidcombe; you will make them a good lord there. Edmund always hung loose on the place. Some day, I suppose, you will have to marry, but you are full young as yet. I should like to see what the house will hold in ten years' time, but do not much expect the luck. Early deaths age people who hear of them. I feel the greyer for this month's work. They tell me you have had Captain Harewood to help you in settling down and summing-up. As he was, in a manner, your guardian for a year or two after the death of your father, I suppose he is the man for such work. I believe he had always a good clear head and practical wit. That wretched boy of his doubtless lost his chance of inheriting it through my fault. We came in there and spoilt the blood. I fancy you have something of the same good gift. It is one I have always coveted, and always failed of, that ready and steady capacity for decisive work. Your mother was a godsend to our family—we never had the least *touch* of active sense among us. All my brother's, now, was loose muddled good sense, running over into nonsense when he fell to work. The worst of him was his tendency to vacuous verbose talk; he was nearly as long-breathed, and as vague in his chatter, as I am. Not such a thorn in the flesh of correspondents, though, I

imagine. I hear Reginald is with his father at Plessey. The place is just endurable in these hot months, but always gives me a notion of thawing-time and webbed feet. It is vexatious, not being able to send for the boy here. Amy would be all the better for him; but of course it is past looking for. She talks of him now and then in a very tender and grateful way. "Redgie was very good; I wonder what his wife will be?" she said, once. There was no chance of such luck for him in sight, I suggested; but she turned to me with singular eyes, and said, "I should like her if she would marry him soon." She has a *carte de visite* of him, which is made much of. Her husband never would sit for one, I recollect. It seems Redgie was useful when nobody else could have done much good. Those few days were hideous. I never shall forget that white dried face of hers, and the heavy look of all her limbs. Poor child, I had to talk her into tears. She had the ways of old people for some time after. Even now she is bad enough; worse, as I told you, in some things. It is great amiability to express such feeling about *turning her out* as you do. No help for it, you know. She would have had more to bear at Lidcombe; and you will soon fit well into the old place. Very fond of it she certainly was, and some day, perhaps, I may

take her over to see you. That will be years hence. Your wife must be good to the dowagers —I dare say she will. It will be curious to meet there anyhow. One thing is a pity, that Amicia can never have a child to keep her company; for I think she can hardly marry again, young as she is. A daughter would have done you no harm, and left her with one side of life filled up —she would have made a perfect mother. I used to think she had much of the social type of Englishwoman. It is such a broken-up sort of life that one anticipates for her. And there was such a tender eager delight in affection, such a soft and warm spirit, such pure pleasure in being and doing good—it is the most delicious nature I know. But you know her, too. Love to your sister from both, if she is still with you. Or did they leave when the Plessey people went?

XIX

FRANCIS CHEYNE TO MRS. RADWORTH

Lidcombe, *Aug. 16th.*

I DO not see how I can possibly stay here. If you had not gone so soon we might have got on; now it is unbearable. There is a network of lawyers' and over-lookers' business to be got through still. I go about the place like a thief, and people throw the title in my face like a buffet at every turn. And I keep thinking of Amicia; her rooms have the sound of her in them. I went down to the lake at sunset and took a pull by myself. The noise of the water running off and drawing under was like some one that sobs and chokes. I went home out of all temper with things. And there was a letter waiting from Aunt Midhurst that would have made one half mad at the best of times. She is right to strike if she pleases; but her sort of talk hits hard. I felt hot and sick with the sense of meanness when I had done. These things are the worst one has to bear. She tells me what to do; gives news of Amicia that would

kill one to think of, if thought did kill; mixes allusions in a way that she only could have the heart to do. I believe she knows or thinks the worst, and always has. And there is nothing one can say in reply to her. It is horrid to lie at her mercy as we do. Their life in that house must be intolerable. I can see Amy sitting silent under her eyes and talk; sick and silent, without crying, like a woman held fast and forced to look on while some one else was under torture. I know so well by myself how she must take the suffering; with a blind, bruised soul, and a sort of painful wonder and pity; divided from herself; beaten and broken down and tired out. If she were to go mad I should know why. And I cannot come near her, and you know how I love her. I would kill myself to save her pain, and I know she is in pain hourly, and I sit here where she used to be. If I had never been born at all she would have been happy enough with her husband alive. I tell you, God knows how good she was to him. If only one of their people here would insult me, I should be thankful. But the place seems to accept me, and they tolerate a new face; I did think some one would show vexation or sorrow —do or say something by way of showing they remembered. I was Quixotic, I suppose, for all the old things made way for me. Except

the one day when Redgie Harewood came over with his father; he did seem to think I had no business here, and I never liked him so well. You recollect how angry it made you. People ought to remember. I was glad he would not stay in the house. That was the only time any one has treated me as I want to be treated. I shall come and stay with you if you will have me. I cannot go about yet, and I hate every corner of this house. When I ride I do literally feel now and then tempted to try and get thrown. Last winter we were all here together, and she used to sing at this time in this room. The voice and the sound of her dress come and go in my hearing. I see her face and all her hair glitter and vibrate as she keeps singing. Her hands and her throat go up and down, and her eyes turn and shine. Then she leaves off playing and comes to me, and I cannot see her near enough; but I feel her hands touch me, and hear her crying. I can do nothing but dream in this way. I want my life and my love back. I am wretched enough now, and she must be unhappier than I am; she is so much better. Her beautiful tender nature must be a pain to her every day. I suppose she is sorry for me. I would die to-day if I could make her forget. My dear sister, you must let me write to you as I can, and not mind what I say. I

could not well write to a man now; and I never was friends enough with any one to open out as I can to you. I must get strength and sense in time, or make an end somehow. I wish to God I could give all this away and be rid of things at once.

XX

REGINALD HAREWOOD TO LADY CHEYNE

Plessey, *Aug. 24th.*

I WAS over at Lidcombe again last week. Frank was to leave to-day for his sister's: the Radworths have asked him for some time. I am also pressed to go, but I hardly like being with him. Unfair, I suppose, but reasonable when one thinks of it. He is a good deal pulled down, and makes very little of his succession: asks after you always, and seems rather to cling to company. All the legal work is over; and I hope you will not be bothered with any more letters. If you care to hear, I may tell you there is some chance of my getting to work after all. They want to diplomatize me: I am to have some secretaryship or other under Lord Fotherington. If anything comes of it I shall leave England next month. I shall have Arthur Lunsford for a colleague, and one or two other fellows I know about me. A. L. was a great swell in our school-days, and used to ride over the heads of us lower boys with

spurs on. I wonder if Frank remembers what a tremendous licking he got once for doing Lunsford's verses for him *without* a false quantity, so that when they were shown up he was caught out and came to awful grief. I don't know if I ever believed in anything as I did once in the get-up of that fellow. To have him over one again will be very comic; he never *could* get on without fags. Do you think the service admits of his licking them? I suspect he might thrash me still if he tried: you know what a splendid big fellow he is. Audley says he is attaché to Lady F., not to the embassy; and makes his way by dint of his songs and his shoulders. People adore a huge musical man. Muscles and music matched will help one to bestride the world. Aimè! I wish I could buy either of them, cheap.

Do you remember an old Madame de Rochelaurier, who used to claim alliance with you through some last-century Cheyne, and was great on old histories?—a lank old lady, with a half-shaved chin and eyes that our grandmother called vulturine—old hard eyes, that turned on springs in her head without appearing to *look?* She has turned up again this year in England, and means to marry her daughter to Frank, the Radworths say. I have seen the daughter, and she is admirable; the most perfect figure, and hair like the purple of a heartsease; her features

are rather too like a little cat's for me; she is white and supple and soft, and I suppose could sparkle and scratch if one rubbed up her fur when the weather was getting electric. Clara thinks her figure must be an English inheritance: she is hardly over seventeen. They do not think Frank will take up with her, though C. would push the match if she could on his account. You would have heard of this from her if I had not written. Madame de Rochelaurier is one-third English, you know, and avows her wishes in the plainest way. She is immense fun, and very bland towards me. She gave me one bit of family history which I must send you: it seems she had it from the great-uncle—"homme impayable, et dont mon cœur porte toujours le deuil—rapiécé." (She really said it unprovoked; Frank is a faded *replica* of his father, in her eyes; "mais Claire! c'est son portrait vivant—fait d'après Courbet." Which I could not make out; why Courbet? and she would not expound.) Here is the story:—The Lady Cheyne of James I.'s time was a great beauty, as we know by that portrait—the one with heaps of full deep-yellow hair, you remember, and opals under the throat. It seems also she was a proverb for goodness, in spite of having to husband that unbeautiful "William, tenth Baron," with the gaunt beard and grisly

collar — that bony-cheeked head we always thought the ugly one of the lot. That was why they gave her the motto "*sans reproche*" on the frame. She had two fellows in love with her—the one a Sir Edmund Brackley, and the other, one regrets to say, the old Reginald Harewood I was christened after, who wrote those poems my father keeps under key, and will not let the Herbert Society have to print. I knew he had a story, and that the old miniature of him, with long curls, once had some inscription, which my grandfather got rubbed out. He was a fastish sort of fellow evidently, and rather a trump; he had some tremendous duel at nineteen with a Scot of the King's household, and killed his man; never could show his face at Court afterwards. The old account was that he lost heart after six months' suit, and killed himself for love of her: but the truth seems to be this; that our perfect Lady Margaret lost her own head, and fell seriously in love with his rhymes and his sword-hand; and one time (this is the Rochelaurier version) let him in at a wrong hour. Then, in the late night, she went to Lord Cheyne and roused him out of sleep, bidding him come now and be judge between her and all the world. So he got up and followed (in no end of a maze one would think), and she brought him to a room where her lover

was lying asleep with his sword unfastened. Then she said,—if he believed her good and honest, let him strike a stroke for her and kill this fellow. And the man held off (you should have heard your uncle tell it, Madame de Rochelaurier said; her own old eyes caught fire, and her hand beat up and down); he stood back and had pity on him, for he was so noble to look at, and had such a boy's face as he lay sleeping along. But she bade him do her right, and that did he, though it were with tears. For the lover had hired that night a gentlewoman of hers to betray her into his hands before it was yet day; and she had just got wind of the device. (But really she had let him in herself in the maid's dress, and just then left him. "Quelle tête!" Madame de Rochelaurier observed.) Then her husband struck him and roused him, and made him stand up there and fight, and before the poor boy had got his tackling ready, ran him through at the first pass under the heart. Then he took his wife's hand and made her dip it into the wound and sprinkle the blood over his face. And the fellow just threw up his eyes and winced as she wetted her hand, and said "Farewell, the most sweet and bitter thing upon earth," and so died. After that she was held in great honour, and most of all by her old suitor, Sir Edmund, who became

friends with her husband till the civil war, when they took up separate sides, and people believed that Brackley (who was of the Parliament party) killed Lord Cheyne at Naseby with his own hand. His troopers, at all events, did, if he missed. The story goes, too, that Cheyne lived to get at the truth about his wife by means of her servant, and "never had any great joy of his life afterwards." Madame de Rochelaurier gave me a little copy of verses sent from my namesake "To his most excellent and perfect lady, the Lady Margaret Cheyne"; she got them from our uncle, who had looked up the story in some old papers once, on a rainy visit at Lidcombe. I copied them for you, thinking it might amuse you when you have time on hand to look them over.

I

Fair face, fair head, and goodly gentle brows,
  Sweet beyond speech and bitter beyond measure;
A thing to make all vile things virtuous,
  Fill fear with force and pain's heart's blood with
    pleasure;
Unto thy love my love takes flight, and flying
Between thy lips alights and falls to sighing.

II

Breathe, and my soul spreads wing upon thy breath;
  Withhold it, in thy breath's restraint I perish;
Sith life indeed is life, and death is death,
  As thou shalt choose to chasten them or cherish;

As thou shalt please; for what is good in these
Except they fall and flower as thou shalt please?

III

Day's eye, spring's forehead, pearl above pearls' price,
  Hide me in thee where sweeter things are hidden,
Between the rose-roots and the roots of spice,
  Where no man walks but holds his foot forbidden;
Where summer snow, in August apple-closes,
Nor frays the fruit nor ravishes the roses.

IV

Yea, life is life, for thou hast life in sight;
  And death is death, for thou and death are parted.
I love thee not for love of my delight,
  But for thy praise, to make thee holy-hearted;
Praise is love's raiment, love the body of praise,
The topmost leaf and chaplet of his days.

V

I love thee not for love's sake, nor for mine,
  Nor for thy soul's sake merely, nor thy beauty's;
But for that honour in me which is thine,
  To make men praise me for my loving duties;
Seeing neither death nor earth nor time shall cover
The soul that lived on love of such a lover.

VI

So shall thy praise be more than all it is,
  As thou art tender and of piteous fashion.
Not that I bid thee stoop to pluck my kiss,
  Too pale a fruit for thy red mouth's compassion;
But till love turn my soul's pale cheeks to red,
Let it not go down to the dusty dead.

R. H.

FINIS

The thing is dated 1625, and he was killed next year, being just my age at the time. I do call it a shame; but Madame de Rochelaurier says it was worth her while, and would make a good story, which one might call "The Cost of a Reputation." "C'était décidément une femme forte," she said placidly. That is true, I should say, but the presence of mind was rather horribly admirable; she must have had great pluck of a certain sort to go straight off to her husband and put the thing into his head; no wonder they called her "*sans reproche.*" I should put "*sans merci*" on the frame if it were mine. Those verses of his read oddly by the light of the story; I have rather a weakness for that pink and perfumed sort of poem that smells of dead spice and preserved leaves; it reads like opening an old jar of pot-pourri, with its stiff scented turns of verse and tags of gold embroidery gone tawny in the dust and rust. And in spite of all the old court-stuff about apples and roses and the rest, there is a kind of serious twang in it here and there, as if the man did care to mean something. I suppose he didn't mind, and liked his life the better on account of her; would have gone on all the same if he had known; fellows do get to be such fools. I don't think I should have cared much either. Conceive Ernest not liking his wife to talk about it. He

found the verses in a book of hers, and wanted to burn them: then sat down and read Prodgers on Pantology, or something in that way, for two hours instead, till Madame de Rochelaurier called, Clara told me that evening. A treatise on the use of fish-bones as manure I think it was. She will not take the Rochelaurier view at all, and says Lady Margaret ought to have been hanged or burnt. As for my forefather, she calls him the perfectest knight and fool on record: the sort of man one could have risked being burnt for with pleasure. She would have been a noble châtelaine in the castle days. One would have taken the chance for her sake; rather. And if ever anything were said about her—all such natures do get ill-used—I think and trust you for one would stand by her and speak up for her. She is too good to let the world be very good to her. Tears and brilliant light mixed in her eyes when she talked of that bit of story: the beautifullest pity and anger and passionate compassion. She might have kept *sans reproche* on her shield, and never written *sans merci* on her heart. I believe she could do anything great. She wanted to be at Naples last year; would have outdone Madame Mario in that splendid labour of hers. She says if she were not in mourning already she would put on deeper black for Cavour now; I

told her not. If she had been born an Italian, and had the chance given her, she would have gone into battle as gladly as the best men. That Venice visit last year set the stamp on it. I never saw her so nearly letting tears really fall as when she quoted that about the "piteous ruinous beauty of all sights in the fair-faced city that death and love fought for when it was alive, and love was beaten, but comes back always to look at the sweet killed body left there adrift between sea and sunset." I am certain Ernest wears her out; the miserable day's work does tell upon her, and the nerves and head will fail bit by bit if it goes on. Men would trust in her and honour her if she were a man; why cannot women as it is? Whatever comes, she ought to look to us at least; to you and me.

XXI

LADY MIDHURST TO MRS. RADWORTH

Ashton Hildred, *Sept. 10th.*

I WISH my news were of a better sort; but I can only say, in answer to your nice kind letter, that Amicia is in a very bad way indeed. At least, I think so; she has not held up her head for weeks, and her face seems to me changing, as some unusually absurd poet of your generation has observed, "from the lily-leaf to the lily-stem." Stalk he might at least have said, but he wanted a sort of villainous rhyme to "flame." A letter from Reginald the other day put some light and colour into her for a minute, but seemed to leave her worse than ever when the warmth was taken off. Next day she could not come down: I, with some conventional brutality, forced a way into her room and found her just asleep, her face crushed into the wet pillow, with the fever of tears on the one cheek uppermost—leaden and bluish with crying and watching. I tell her that to weep herself green is no widow's duty, and no sign of ripeness; but she keeps

wearing down; is not visibly thinner yet, but must be soon. Her eyelids will get limp and her eyelashes ragged at this rate; she speaks with a sort of hard low choke in the notes of her voice which is perfectly ruinous. Very few things seem to excite her for a second; she can hardly read at all: sits with her chin down and eyes half drawn over like a sleepy sick child. I should not wonder to see her hair beginning to go: she actually looks *sharp:* one might expect her brows and chin to become obtrusive in six months' time. Even the rumour we hear (not at first hand you know) about a Rochelaurier *revival* did not seem to rouse or amuse her. If there *is* anything in the chatter, one can only be glad of such an improvement in the second generation; for I cannot well conceive Frank's marrying, or your approving, a new edition of Mademoiselle Armande de Castigny. Fabien de Rochelaurier was *the* most victimized, unhappiest specimen of a husband I ever saw: a Prudhomme-Coquardeau of good company, if you can take—and will tolerate—the Gavarni metaphor. The life she led him is *unknown;* half her exploits, I believe devoutly, never reached the light—many I suspect never would bear the air. You *must* know what people say of that young M. de Saverny, who goes about with them—the man you used to get on so well

with two years ago? He *never* turned up during Madame de Saverny's life anywhere—and *months* after the poor wretched lady's death his father produces this child of four, and takes him about as his orphaned heir, and presents him — *notamment* to the Rochelauriers, who make an infinite ado about the child ever after. Why, at one time he wanted to marry the girl himself—had played with her in childhood—plighted troth among budding roses—chased butterflies together—Paul et Virginie, nothing less. This was a year ago, just after he went back to France, she being barely out of her convent. Do you want to know why, and how, it was broken off? Look in the table of affinities.

Of course, if the girl is nice, *tant mieux*. Remembering my dear mother, it is not for me to object to a French Lady Cheyne. But a Rochelaurier—if Rochelaurier it is to be—you will allow is rather startling. Old M. de Saverny is dead, certainly, which is one safeguard, and really a thing to be thankful for. He was awful. Valfons, Lauzun, Richelieu's own self, hardly more compromising. And here the mother tells. Unluckily, but so it is. Taking one thing with another into account, though, Philomène might get over this well enough. Ce nom tramontain et dévot m'a toujours crispé les nerfs. But if

Frank likes her, well and good. People do not always inherit things. Your friend, for instance, the amiable Octave, is not very like that exquisite and infamous old father. Only I should be inclined to take time, and look well about me. Here, again, you may be invaluable to the boy. By what I remember, I should hardly have thought Philomène de Rochelaurier would turn out the sort of girl to attract him. Pretty I have no doubt she is. Octave I always thought unbearable; that complexion of *singed white* always gives me the notion of a sheet of note-paper flung on the fire by mistake, and snatched off with the edges charred. Et puis ces yeux de lapin. Et cette voix de serin. The blood is running out, evidently. M. de Saverny *père* was great in his best days. They used to say last year that Count Sindrakoff had supplanted his ghost *auprès de la Rochelaurier*. She is nearly my age. But I believe the Russian was a young man of the Directory or thereabouts. I am getting horridly scandalous, but Armande was always too much for my poor patience. She thinks herself one of Balzac's women, and gets up affairs to order. Besides, she always fell short of diplomacy through pure natural lack of brain; and yet was always drawing blunt arrows to the head, and taking shaky aim at some shifting public bull's-eye. I wrote a

little thing about her some years since, and labelled it, "La Femme de Cinquante Ans, Étude"; it got sent to Jules de Versac, who touched it up, and put it in the *Timon*—it was the best sketch I ever made. I dare say she knows I wrote it. It amuses me ineffably to find her taking up with Redgie Harewood; I suppose by way of paying indirect court to us. I know he has more than the usual boy's weakness for women twice his age, but surely there *can* be nothing of the sort here? They seem exquisitely confidential by his own innocent account. She always did like lamb and veal. The daughter must be too young for him. A woman with natural red and without natural grey is no doubt not yet worth his looking at—that is, unless there were circumstances which made it wrong and unsafe—but I speak of serious things. I thought at one time he was sure to upset all kinds of women with that curious personal beauty of his, as his poor sister used to upset men; he is such a splendid boy to look at, as to face; but now I see his lot in life lies the other way, and he will always be the footstool and spindle of any woman who may choose to have him. Less mischief will come of him that way, which is consoling to remember. Indeed, I doubt now if he ever will do any; but if he gets over thirty without some damage to

himself I shall be only too thankful. Really, I think, in default of better, I would rather see him than Frank married to Mademoiselle de Rochelaurier. Lord Cheyne has time and room to beat about in, and choose from right or left. Now Redgie, I begin to believe, will have to marry before long. It would be something to keep him out of absurdities. We know too well what a head it is when any windmill is set spinning inside it. And, without irony, I am convinced Madame de Rochelaurier must have a real kindly feeling about him. She was out of her depth in love with your father in 1825, and Redgie now and then reminds me a little of him; Frank is placider, and not quite such a handsome fellow as my brother used to be. It is so like her to come out with old family histories and relics as the best means of astonishing the boy's weak mind; but I did not know she had still any actual and tangible memorials of the time by her. I have been trying to recollect the date of her daughter's birth; she was extant in '46, for I saw her in Paris, a lean child in the *rose blonde* line. Three, I should think, at the time, or perhaps five—a good ten years younger than Octave de Saverny. Redgie's three or four years over would just tell in the right way—Frank I should call too young. I want you to tell me honestly how you look at

it. To me it seems he might brush about the world a little more before he begins marrying. Only this instant come of age, you know. The attachment might be a good thing enough for him. Mademoiselle Philomène I suppose must be clever; there is no reason to presume she can have inherited the poor old vicomte's flaccidity of head and tongue. Very spiritually Catholic, and excitable on general matters, the girl ought to be by this time; Armande, I remember, was a tremendous legitimist (curious for her) of late years, and has doubtless undertaken to convert Reginald to sane views, and weed out his heresies and democracies. I should like to see and hear the process. Since the empire came in I believe she has put lilies on her carpets, and rallied her crew round the old standard with a will. Henri V. must be truly thankful for her. Desloches, the religious journalist, was one of her converts—the man whom Sindrakoff, with hyperborean breadth of speech, once indicated to me as a *cochon manqué*. Ever since the *Légende des Siècles* came out *I* have called him Sultan Mourad's pig. One might suggest as a motto for his paper that line,

Le pourceau misérable et Dieu se regardèrent.

Edmond Ramel made me a delicious sketch of the subject, with Armande de Rochelaurier, in

sultanic apparel and with a beard beyond all price or praise, flapping the flies off, her victims (social and otherwise) strewing the background. On apercevait en haut, parmi des étoiles, le bon Dieu qui larmoyait, tout en s'essuyant l'œil gauche d'un mouchoir azuré, au coin duquel on voyait brodé le chiffre du journal de Desloches, numéro cent. Cette figure béate avait les traits —devinez—du pauvre vieux vicomte Fabien. Je n'ai jamais ri de si bon cœur. Que Victor Hugo me pardonne!

As I suppose nobody thinks just yet of betrothals or such like, I want to hear what you think of doing for the next month or so. It is a pity to leave Lidcombe bare and void all the autumn weeks. The place is splendid then, with a sad and noble sort of beauty in all the corners of it. Such hills and fields, as Redgie neatly expressed himself in that last remarkable lyric of his, "shaken and sounded through by the trumpets of the sea." The Hadleigh sands are worth seeing about the equinox; only, Heaven knows, we have all had sight enough of the sea for one year. Still, Frank ought to be about the place now and then, or they will never grow together properly. Why can you not go down together, and set up house in a quiet sisterly fashion for a little?—he has hardly stayed there ten days in all since the spring. After liv-

ing more than six weeks with you, except that little Lidcombe interlude at the end of July and those few days in London, it is his turn to play host. Or, if any sort of feeling stands in the way of it, why not go to Lord Charnworth's, as you did last year? If there is anything sound in the Rochelaurier business, it will grow all the better for a little separation—I am sure I for one would not for worlds mettre des bâtons dans les roues. But if it is a mere bit of intrigue on the mother's part (and I can hardly believe Armande a trustworthy person), surely it is better cut loose at once, and let drift. I shall try and see Philomène this winter, whether they return or stay. The Charnworths are perfect people, and will be only too glad of you all. A cousin's death is no absolute reason for going into a modern Thebaid, nice as he was. And I hardly suppose you still retain your old preference of Octave de Saverny to Lord Charnworth in the days before the latter poor man married—entirely, I have always believed, a result of your early cruelty. Now, if you stay at home and keep up, in or out of London, the intimacy that seems to be getting renewed, I predict you will have the whole maison Rochelaurier et C[ie] upon your hands at Blocksham before you know where to turn. Science will be blown up heaven-high, and Mr. Radworth will commit suicide.

I am getting too terrible in my anticipations, and must come to a halt before all my colours have run to black. Besides, our doctor has just left, and the post begins to clamour for its prey. He gives us very singular auguries about his patient. For my own part, I must say I had begun to have a certain dim prevision in the quarter to which he seems to point. At all events, it appears she is in no present danger, and we must not press the doubt. I trust you not to intimate the least hope or fear of such a thing happening, and only refer to it here to relieve the anxious feeling I might have given you by the tone of my first sentences. It would be unpardonable to excite uneasiness or pity to no purpose. False alarms, especially in the posthumous way, are never things to be excused on any hand. You can just let Frank know that we none of us apprehend any actual risk: which is more than I, at least, would have said a month since. She is miserably reticent and depressed. I must end now, with all loves, as people used to say ages ago. Take good care of them all, and still better care of yourself—on many accounts—and think in the kindest way you can of

Yours most affectionately,

H. MIDHURST.

XXII

CAPTAIN HAREWOOD TO REGINALD

Plessey, *Oct 22d.*

My Dear Reginald:

You will at once begin preparing for your work, unless you wish to throw this chance too over, and incur my still more serious displeasure. That is all the answer I shall make you. You must be very well aware that for years back you have disgracefully disappointed me in every hope and every plan I have formed with regard to you. Of your school and college career I shall have a few words to say presently. It is against my expressed wish and expectation that you are now in London instead of being here under my eye: and even after all past experience of your utter disregard of discipline and duty, I cannot but feel surprise at your present proposal. If you do visit the Radworths before returning home, you will do so in direct defiance of my desire. That course, understand, is distinctly forbidden you. After our last interview on the subject I can only consider the very suggestion

as an act of an insolent and rebellious nature. I know the construction to which your conduct towards your cousin has not unnaturally exposed you; and you know that I know it. Upon her and upon yourself your inexcusable and puerile behaviour has already drawn down remark and reproach. I am resolved, and I intend that you shall remember I am, to put an end to this. I have come upon a letter from your grandmother, dated some time back—I think before the miserable catastrophe in which you were mixed up at Portsmouth—bearing immediately in every line upon this affair: and I have read it with attention. Secrets of that kind you have no right to have or to keep; and I have every right and reason to investigate them. Another time, if you intend to pursue a furtive line of action, you will do well to make it a more cautious one: the letter I speak of was left actually under my hand, not so much as put away among other papers. Upon the style of Lady Midhurst's address to you I shall not here remark; but you must expect, I should think, to hear that my view of such things is far enough from being the same as hers. Rightly or wrongly, I consider the sort of relationship she appears to contemplate in that letter as at once criminal and contemptible: and I cannot pretend to observe it with indifference or toler-

ation. You seem to me to have written and acted childishly indeed, but not the less sinfully. However, I am not now about to preach to you. The One safeguard against natural evil and antidote to natural unwisdom you have long been encouraged to neglect and overlook. All restrictions placed around you by the care of others and of myself you have even thus early chosen to discard. It is poor comfort to reflect that, as far as I know, you have not as yet fallen into the more open and gross vices which many miserable young fools think it almost laudable to indulge in. This can but be at best the working of a providential accident, not the outcome of any real self-denial or manly self-restraint on your part. Without this I count all fortuitous abstinence from sin worth very little. In a wiser eye than man's many a seemingly worse character may be purer than yours. From childhood upwards, I must once for all remind you, you have thwarted my wishes and betrayed my trust. Prayer, discipline, confidence, restraint, hourly vigilance, untiring attention, one after another, failed to work upon you. Affectionate enough by nature, and with no visibly vicious tendencies, but unstable, luxurious, passionate, and indolent, you set at naught all guidance, and never in your life would let the simple noble sense of duty take

hold of you. At school you were incessantly under punishment; at home you were constantly in disgrace. Pain and degradation could not keep you right; to disgrace the most frequent, to pain the most severe, you opposed a deadly strength of sloth and tacit vigour of rebellion. So your boyhood passed; I have yet in my ear the remark of one of your tutors—"Severity can do little for the boy; indulgence, nothing." What the upshot of your college career was you must remember only too well, and I still hope not without some regret and shame. Absolute inert idleness and wilful vanity, after a long course of violated discipline in small matters, brought you in time to the dishonourable failure you had been at no pains to avoid.

And yet you know well enough whether or no I have done and purpose, even yet, to do all for you that I can; whether I have not always been but too ready to palliate and indulge; whether, from the very first, the utmost, tenderest allowance has not been made for you, and the least possible share of your own faults laid to your own charge. This, I say, you do, in your conscience and heart, know, and must needs bear me witness to the truth of it. I must confess I have not now much hope left. Little comfort and little pleasure have you ever given me, and I expect to get less and less from

you as our lives go on. One thing, though, I can, at worst, be sure of: that my own duty shall be done. As long as I can hold them at all, I will not throw the reins upon your neck. I will not, while I can help it, allow you to speak, to act, if possible to think, in a way likely to injure others. I desire you not to go to the house of a man whom I know you profess, out of your own inordinate impertinence and folly, to dislike and contemn; I trust you, at least, as a gentleman, to respect my opinion and my confidence, if I cannot count on your obedience as my son; on these grounds I do believe and expect you will not visit Blocksham. Mr. Ernest Radworth is a man infinitely your superior in every way. For many years he has led a most pure, laborious, and earnest life. The truly great and genuine talents accorded to him at his birth he has submitted to the most conscientious culture, and turned to the utmost possible advantage. To himself he has been consistently and admirably true; to others I believe he has invariably been most helpful, beneficent, exemplary in all his dealings. By one simple process of life he has kept himself pure and made all near him happy. From first to last he was the stay and pride of his family; and since he has been left alone in his father's place he has nobly kept up the distinction which, in earliest

youth, and even boyhood, he very deservedly acquired. A fit colleague and a fit successor, this one, (as you would acknowledge if you were capable of seeing) for the greatest labourers in the field of English science. Excellent and admirable in all things, he is in none more worthy of respect than in his private and domestic relations. There is not a man living for whom I entertain a more heartfelt regard—I had well nigh said reverence—than for Mr. Radworth. I verily believe he has not a thing, humanly speaking, to be ashamed of in looking back upon his past life. Every hour, so to say, has had its share of noble toil—and, therefore, also its share of immediate reward. For these men work for the world's sake, not for their own: and from the world, not from themselves, they do in time receive their full wages. There is no more unsullied and unselfish glory on earth than that of the faithful and reverent scientific workman: and to such one can always reasonably hope that the one thing which may perhaps be wanting will in due time be supplied. The contempt or disrelish of a young, idle, far from noteworthy man for such a character as that of Ernest Radworth is simply a ludicrous and deplorable phenomenon. You are incompetent to appreciate for one moment even a tenth part of his excellence. But I am resolved

you shall make no unworthy use of a friendship you are incapable of deserving. Of your cousin I will here say only that I trust she may in time learn fully to apprehend the value of such a heart and such a mind. By no other path than this of both repentant and retrospective humility can she ever hope to attain real happiness or honour. I should, for Ernest's sake, truly regret being compelled to adopt Lady Midhurst's sufficiently apparent opinion that she is not worthy to perceive and decide on such a path.

You now know my desire; and I do not choose to add any further appeal. Expecting, for the sake at least of your own immediate prospects, that you will follow it,

I remain your anxious and affectionate father,

PHILIP HAREWOOD.

XXIII

FRANCIS CHEYNE TO MRS. RADWORTH

Lidcombe, *Nov. 13th.*

I HAVE just read your letter. Come by all means next month, and stay as long as you can. Every day spent here by myself is a heavier and more subtle irritation to me than the one before. Reginald will come for a few days, at least; his foreign outlook seems to have fallen back into vapour and remote chance. The Captain was over here lately, looking pinched and hard—a head to make children recoil and wince at the sight of it. He is still of great help to me. As to Madame de Rochelaurier, to be quite open, I had rather not meet her just now; so you will not look for me before the day they leave you. Afterwards I may come over to escort you and Ernest, if it turns out worth while. Anything to get about a little, without going out of reach. News, I suppose, must come from Ashton Hildred before very long. At such a time I have no heart to spare for thinking over plans or people. Your praise of

Mademoiselle de Rochelaurier is, of course, all right and just. She is a very jolly sort of girl, and sufficiently handsome; and if Redgie does marry her I shall just stop short of envying him. Does Madame really want me to take such a gift at her hand? Well and good; it is incomparably obliging; but then, when I am looking at Mademoiselle Philomène, and letting myself go to the sound of her voice like a song to the tune, unhappily there gets up between us such an invincible exquisite memory of a face ten times more beautiful and loveable to have in sight of one; pale when I saw it last, as if drawn down by its hair, heavily weighted about the eyes with a presage of tears, sealed with sorrow, and piteous with an infinite unaccomplished desire. The old deep-gold hair and luminous grey-green eyes shot through with colours of sea-water in sunlight, and threaded with faint keen lines of fire and light about the pupil, beat for me the blue-black of Mademoiselle de Rochelaurier's. Then that mouth of hers and the shadow made almost on the chin by the underlip —such sad perfect lips, full of tender power and faith, and her wonderful way of lifting and dropping her face imperceptibly, flower-fashion, when she begins or leaves off speaking; I shall never hear such a voice in the world, either. I cannot, and need not now, pretend to dissem-

ble or soften down what I feel about her. I do love her with all my heart and might. And now that, after happy years, she is fallen miserable and ill, dangerously ill, for aught I know, and incurably miserable—who can say?—it is not possible for me, sitting here in her house that I have had to drive her out of, to think very much of anything else, or to think at all of any other woman in the way of liking. This is mere bare truth, not sentiment or excited fancy by any means, and you will not take it for such a sort of thing. If I can never marry the one woman perfectly pleasant to me and faultlessly fit for me in the whole beautiful nature of her, I will never insult her and my own heart by marrying at all. Aunt Midhurst's view of the Rochelaurier family has no great weight with me; but I have a little hope now, after reading what she says to you, that, as she is clearly set against the chance of any other marriage for me, she may, perhaps, be some day brought to think of the one desire of my whole life as a possible thing to fulfil. Even to you I dare not well hint at such a hope as that; but you must now understand for good how things are with me; if not that, then nothing. You take her reference to Redgie Harewood to be a feint, and meant spitefully. I think not; she has the passion of intrigue and management still strong;

likes nothing so well, evidently, as the sense of power to make and break matches, build schemes and overset them. I should like to see Harewood married, and peace again at Plessey; he is not a bad fellow; and she was always fond of him. I will say he earned that at Portsmouth, but I hate to hear of his being able to write to her now, and then see and think how much there is between us to get over. If I could get at her by any way possible, I could keep her up still—but I can hardly see how he is to help her much. Then, again, if he were to marry, they might see each other; and in no end of ways it would be a good thing for him. His idolatry is becoming a bore, if not worse; you should find him an ideal to draw his worship off you a little. I know so well now how miserable it is to feel on a sudden the thing turn serious, and have to fight it before one has time to see how. If it were fair to tell you all I have had to remember and regret only since this year began, and only because I knew how, after Cheyne's death, her gentle goodness would make her wretched at the thought of past discontent with him — and Heaven knows she could not but have felt him to be less than she was; and perfect she was to him always. I wish people would blame her to me, and let me fight them. I can't fight *her* for blaming her-

self. I write the awfullest stuff, because I am really past writing at all. If I could fall to work and forget, leave off thinking for good, turn brute, it would be only rational for me. I, who have helped to hurt her, and would have set myself against the world to spare her, what do you conceive she thinks of me? This air that has nothing of her left it chafes me to breathe. I know how sometimes somewhere she remembers and misses things that she had got used to — little chance things that were about her in her husband's time. A book or two of hers were left; you will see them when you come; I cannot write, and cannot send them without a word. I am more thoroughly afraid of hearing from Lady M. again than I ever was of anything on earth—no child could dread any torture as I do that. It is quite clear, you know, that they expect a confinement—in some months' time, perhaps. God knows I wish there had been a son! Only they will not say it; so I must stay here and take my trouble. It does not startle me: nothing can well be worse for me or better than it is now. There is no such pleasure to be had out of my name or house that I need want to fight for it or hold to it. I do hope they will make things good to her. You need hardly express anger about the poor aunt. Those two are her children, and she

always rather hated us for their sakes. Indeed, as about Reginald, I am not sure she is so far out of the way. You must see that Ernest flinches now and then when he is talked of; and, without any fear of scandal, one may want to avoid the look of it. He is not the sort of fellow to be sure of; not that he is a bad sort. *Enfin* (as she says), you know what it means—Ernest is not great in the way of company, and Redgie and you are just good friends; the woman is not really fool enough to think evil, though she is rather of the vulturine order as to beak and diet. For the rest, I know how wise and kind you are—it is a shame to lean on you as I do, but you are safe to come to.

XXIV

LADY CHEYNE TO MRS. RADWORTH

Ashton Hildred, *Nov. 22d.*

My Dear Clara:

I have got leave to write and thank you. Nothing has made me so happy for a long time as to know how kind you have been, and that you are still such good friends with me. It was no want of thankfulness to you that made me leave Portsmouth in that horrid way to get home here. I knew how good you had been, and you are not to make me out too bad. To hear from you, even such a little word, was nicer than to get the things you sent. But I was as glad as I could be to have some of them back. I would never have let any one send for them to Lidcombe, so it was all the kinder of you to do it this way. I hope you will all be well there, and quite happy while you stay. It is nice to think of people about the poor house. They are all bent on making me out ill. I am not ill in the least; only faint now and then, and always very tired. I am terribly

tired now all my life through, awake and asleep. I feel as if there was nothing nice to think of in the world, and as if it were easier to begin crying than thinking. It is only because I am foolish naturally and afraid to face things. If people were less good to me I should be just as afraid to feel at all, or at least to say I did. But good as they are now, my own nearest friends here could not have been better to me than *I know* you were *then*—writing letters and nursing and saving me all sorts of wretched things. You were as good as Reginald, and I had only you two to help me through, but you did all that could be done, both of you, and I knew you did. When I am most tired and would like to *let go* of everything else, I try to hold on to my remembrance of that. If I had not been a little worthy to be pitied, I hope now and then you would not have been quite so good.

I am sorrier than I can say to hear how foolish you think him. Ever since that I have thought of you two together. You say it so kindly, too, that it is wretched to hear said. I do hope it is only his silly candid habit of showing things he feels and thinks—he always thought about you so much and in such an excited way. You are so much beyond me, and except us two he never had any close ally

among his own relations; there are hardly any other women, you know. If I had been like you it would have been different; but so few people will take him at his best, poor boy, and I am so little use, though he is fond of me.

I had got a sort of hint from my grandmother which broke the surprise of the news you send me. I hope, as you seem to wish for it, that Mademoiselle de Rochelaurier and your brother may have all things turn out as they would like; and I shall be as happy as possible to know they do. It is not the least a painful hearing to me that there will be a wedding at the right time. I am only too glad there should be some one there, and I am sure, if you both are so fond of her, she must be perfectly nice. Tell me when to congratulate. I wish I had ever seen her; nobody here knows at all what she is like. But I seem to have heard people say her mother is not pretty.

They will not let me write any more—my pen is to be dragged off if I try. And really there is this much reason in it, that I am most stupidly tired, and see myself opposite too hideous to speak of. I feel as if I were *running down;* but I don't mean to run out for some time yet. So don't let there be any one put out on such a foolish account as that. I hope Mr. Radworth's

head and eyes keep better; they are of rather more value than mine, and I am always sorry to hear of his going back in health. My love to Redgie, and try to make him good.

XXV

REGINALD HAREWOOD TO EDWARD AUDLEY

Lidcombe, *Dec. 15th.*

I AM not coming out at all. I can't now; the whole concern is blown up. I have had a most awful row with my father; you know the sort of way he always does write and talk; and two months ago he gave me the most incredible blowing up—I suppose no fellow ever got such a letter. So I just dropped into him by return of post, and let the whole thing lie over. He chose to pitch into her too, in the most offensive way. Now I'm not going to behave like a sneak to her because she is too good for them. She trusts me in the most beautiful way. I would give up the whole earth for her. Frank would have made an end of that fellow long ago if he had the right sort of pluck. And you see a man can't let himself be bullied into skulking. It's all fair chaffing about it if you please, but you don't in the least know what the real thing is like. Here she is tied down and obliged to let that sort of animal talk to

her, and go about with her, and take her by the hand or arm—I tell you I have seen it. It was like seeing a stone thrown at her. And she speaks to him without wincing. I do think the courage of women is something unknown. I should run twenty times a day if I couldn't fight. He brings her specimens of things. You can't conceive what a voice and face and manner the fellow has. She lets him talk about his symptoms. He tells me he wishes he could eat what I can. It would be all very well if he had anything great about him. I suppose women can put up with men that have; but a mere ingenious laborious pedant and prig, and a fellow that has hardly human ways, imagine worshipping that! I believe he is a clever sort of half-breed between ape and beaver. But the sort of thing cannot go on. I found her yesterday by herself in the library here, looking out references for him. The man was by way of being ill up-stairs. She spoke to me with a sort of sad laugh in her eyes, not smiling; and her brows winced, as they never do for him, whatever he says. She is so gentle and perfect when he is there; and I feel like getting mad. Well, somehow I let her see I knew what an infernal shame it was, and she said wives were meant for the work. Then I began and told her she had no sort of

right to take it in that way, and she couldn't expect any fellow to stand and look on while such things were—and I would as soon have looked on at Haynau any day. I dare say I talked no end of folly, but I was regularly off my head. Unless she throws me over I will never give her up. She never will let her brother know how things are with her. But to see him sit by her ought to be enough for a man with eyes and a heart. I know you were a good deal in love last year, but Miss Charnworth couldn't have put anybody into such a tender fever of pity as this one puts me; you can't be sorry for her; and I don't think you can absolutely worship anything you are not a little sorry for. To have to pity what is such a way above you, no one could stand that. It gives one the wish to be hurt for her. I think I should let him insult me and strike me if she wanted it. Nothing hurts me now but the look of her. She has sweet heavy eyes, like an angel's in some great strange pain; eyes without fear or fault in them, which look out over coming tears that never come. There is a sort of look about her lips and under the eyelids as if some sorrow had pressed there with his finger, out of love for her beauty, and left the mark. I believe she knew I wanted her to come away. If there were only somewhere

to take her to and hide her, and let her live in her own way, out of all their sight and reach, that would do for me. I tell you, she took my hands sadly into hers and never said a word, but looked sideways at the floor, and gave a little beginning kind of sigh twice; and I got mad. I don't know how I prayed to her to come then. But she turned on me with her face trembling and shining, and eyes that looked wet without crying, and made me stop. Then she took the books and went out, and up to him. Do you imagine I can be off and on, or play tricks with my love, for such a woman as that? Because of my father, perhaps, or Ernest Radworth? She has a throat like pearl-colour, with flower-colour over that; and a smell of blossom and honey in her hair. No one on earth is so infinitely good as she is. Her fingers leave a taste of violets on the lips. She is greater in her mind and spirit than men with great names. Only she never lets her greatness of heart out in words. I don't think now that her eyes are hazel. She has in her the royal scornful secret of a great silence. Her hair and eyelashes change colour in the sun. I shall never come to know all she thinks of. I believe she is doing good somewhere with her thoughts. She is a great angel, and has charge of souls. She has clear thick eye-

brows that grow well down, coming full upon the upper lid, with no gap such as there is above some women's eyes before you come to the brow. They have an inexplicable beauty of meaning in them, and the shape of the arch of them looks tender. She has charge of me for one. I must have been a beast or a fool if there had not been such a face as that in the world. She has the texture and colour of rose-leaves crushed deep into the palms of her hands. She can forgive and understand and be angry at the right time: things that women never can do. You know Lady Midhurst is set dead against her, and full of the most infernal prejudice. The best of them are cruel and dull about each other. I let out at her (Lady M., that is), one day when we spoke of it, and she stopped me. "She is always very good to you," she said; which is true enough. "You and your sister are her children, and she always rather hated Frank and me for your sakes. I like her none the worse, for my part. I don't know that she is so far wrong about you. Once I could have wanted her to like me, but we must put up with people's deficiencies. It is very unreasonable, of course, but she does not like me in the least, I quite know": and the way she smiled over this no one could understand without knowing her. "Only there

is one thing to be sorry about: that hard pointed way of handling things leaves her with the habit of laughter that shrinks up the heart she has by inches." Those words stuck to me. "If she believed or felt more than she does, her cleverness and kindness would work so much better. As it is, one can never go to her for warmth or rest; and one cannot live on the sharp points of phrases. She has edges in her eyes, and thorns in her words. That perpetual sardonic patience which sits remarking on right and wrong with cold folded hands and equable observant eyes, half contemptuous in an artistic way of those who choose either—that cruel tolerance and unmerciful compassion for good and bad—that long tacit inspection, as of a *dilettante* cynic bidden report critically on the creatures in the world, that custom of choosing her point of view where she can see the hard side of things glitter and the hard side of characters refract light in her eyes, till she comes (if one durst say so) to patronize God by dint of despising men—oh, it gets horrid after a time! It takes the heart out of all great work. Her world would stifle the Garibaldis. It is all dust and sand, jewels and iron, dead metal and stone, and dry sunshine: like some fearful rich no-man's land. I could as soon read the 'Chartreuse de Parme' as listen

to her talk long; it is Stendhal diluted and transmuted; and I never could read cynicism." You see how her thoughts get hold of one; I was reminded of her first words, and the whole thing came back on me. She said just that; I know the turn of her eyes and head as she spoke, and how her cheeks and neck quivered here and there. Then she made all excuses, the gentlest wise allowances; you see what a mind and spirit she has. She keeps always splendid and right. She can understand unkindness to herself, you see; never dreaming that nothing can be so unnatural as that; but not a dry ignoble tone of heart and narrow hardness of eye. Not to love greatness and abhor baseness, each for its own sake—that is the sort of thing she finds unforgivable and incomprehensible. She would make all things that are not evil and have not to be gone right at and fought with till they give in brave and just, full of the beauty of goodness and a noble liberty: all men fit men to honour, and all women fit women to adore.

That is what she is. Only if I were to write for ever, and find you in heavy reading for centuries, I should never get to express a thing about her. Fancy any one talking about that little Rochelaurier girl. *She* does, and to me, or did till I made her see it was no use, and I

didn't like it as chaff. Philomène is a good pretty child, and as to heart and mind believes in Pius Iscariot and the vermin run to earth this year at Gaeta. They think my father might put up with that. He used to admire the men of December till they did something to frighten the ruminant British bull at his fodder, and set that sweet animal lowing and thrusting out volunteer bayonets, by way of horns, in brute self-defence. I remember well how he spoke once of the Beauharnais to me, *à propos* of my reading *Châtiments* one vacation. It was before you went down, I think, that we had a motion up about that pickpocket. My father believes in the society that was saved; he holds tight to the salvation-by-damnation theory. "A strong man and born master"—all that style of thing, you know. Liberty means cheese to one's bread, then honey, then turtle-fat. Libre à vous, MM. les doctrinaires! What infinite idiocy and supreme imbecility to get hanged, burnt, crucified, for one's cause! You want proof you are a fool?—you are beaten; all's said. The smoke of the martyr's pile is the refutation of the martyr—in the nostrils of a pig. And when people have ideas like that, and act on them, how can one expect them to see the simplest things rightly? How should they know a great spirit or noble in-

tellect from a base little one? Souls don't carry badges for such people to know them by; and whatever does not walk in uniform or livery they *cannot* take into account. As to me, and I suppose all men who are not spoilt or fallen stolid are much the same, when I see a great goodness I know it—when I meet my betters I want to worship them at once, and I can always tell when any one is born my better. When I fall in with a nature and powers above me, I cannot help going down before it. I do like admiring; service of one's masters must be good for one, it is so perfectly pleasant. Then, too, one can never go wrong on this tack. I feel my betters in my blood; they send a heat and sting all through one at first sight. And the delight of feeling small and giving in when one does get sight of them is beyond words—it seems to me all the same whether they beat one in wisdom and great gifts and power, or in having been splendid soldiers or great exiles, or just in being beautiful. It is just as reasonable to worship one sort as the other; they are all one's betters, and were made for one to come down on one's knees to, clearly enough. Victor Hugo or Miss Cherbury the actress, Tennyson or a fellow who rode in the Balaklava charge when you and I were in the fifth form, we must knock under and be thankful

for having them over our heads somewhere in the world; and small thanks to us. But when men who are by no means our betters won't do so much as this, and want to walk into us for doing it, I don't see at all that one is bound to stand that. So that if I am ever to be turned out of my way, it won't be by anything my father may say or do.

I suspect you repent of writing and reading by this time; but please remember how you did go into me last year about Eleanor; and you know by this time there was not so much even for a fellow in love to say about her.

Yours always,

R. E. Harewood.

XXVI

LADY CHEYNE TO REGINALD HAREWOOD

Ashton Hildred, *Jan. 14th, 1862*

My Dearest Reginald:

I am writing to-day instead of our grandmother. She is very unwell, and wants you to hear from us. They will not let her trouble or exert herself in any way, but she is bent on your getting a word; so, as I am well enough to write, I must take her place. I am afraid she is upset on your account. I think she has even exchanged letters with your father about it. They seem to fear something very bad for you. You know by this time how much we both love you, and ought to care a little for us. I know I must not talk now as if I could fall back on self-esteem or self-reliance. I don't the least want to appeal in that style, but just to plead with you as well as I may. I am stupid enough, too, and can't put things well; only, except the people here at home, you are the one person left me that I may let myself love. I am very grateful to you, and I beg

you to let me come in this way to you. You must see that there is nobody now that I love as well. I want you to remember as I do how good you were once. If I am ill it comes of miserable thought. You talk of her compassionate noble nature. Dearest, if she has any mercy, let her show it and save you. It is cruel to make people play with poison in this way. I would not blame her for worlds. I want to thank her and keep good friends, but she must not let you run to ruin. Think what imaginable good end can there be to this? I suppose she is infinitely clever and brave, as you say, but how can she face things *for you?* Every one would say the horridest things. Do you want shame for her? It would break your life up at the beginning. I have no right to accuse—should have none anyhow—but one has always a right to be sorry. I see you could not be happy even if all were given up on both sides. Don't let her give all up. I dare say she might; and that of course is braver than any treason. If you knew my own great misery! Sometimes I feel the whole air hot about me; I should like to cry and moan out loud, or beat myself. I am not old, and if I live all my time out I shall never feel as if my face had a natural look. I wish I were very old, and gone foolish. I was false in every

word and thought I had. I cannot kill myself, you see, even by writing it down. Thinking of it only hurts, without doing harm; I want to be done harm to. I never spoke to you at Portsmouth. If you never did know, you see now. I thought you all knew. I seemed to myself to have the eyes of a woman who has been cheating and lying to some one just dead. I was penitent enough to have had the mark on me. It would be better than playing false, to leave her husband. But then she takes you —your life and all. I do think she must not be let. I hate repeating what was said viciously; and God knows I must not talk or think scandal: but Madame de Rochelaurier, her own friend and yours, says things about her and M. de Saverny; it is no unkindness of my grandmother's. She does not like Clara now, but she is clear of all that, quite. And there were letters, certainly. Madame de Rochelaurier said so; they were the cleverest she ever saw, but not good to write. It was two or three years ago; M. de Saverny let her see them. It was base and wretched, and he keeps them. He is a detestable man; but you cannot get over that. I believe no harm of her; only you will not let her take you from us. You must see it would be the end of all our pleasure and hope. People would laugh too. If you want

to *stand by C.*, as you say, how can you begin by helping people to scandal? I am so sorry for you, I know you are too fond of her and good to her, and would never give her up; and I am not fit to help. Still, whatever I am, I do know there must be right and wrong somehow in the world. You should not make so much misery. I don't mean as to the people nearest you both. On your side of course I cannot tell you how to look at things; and as to hers I can only be sorry, *and am very.* But you know, after all, my mother is something to you while she lives; you are my very own brother and dearest one friend. I wish you might see her. She is so full of the tenderest beautiful ways. I know what she hears hurts her. She shows little, but she cried when our grandmother gave her letters to read. You might be so good to us, for we can never do anything or be much to you. If evil comes of this I shall think we were all born to it. There will be *no one* left to think of or speak to without some afterthought or aftertaste of memory and shame. The names nearest ours will have stings in them to make us wince. It is not good for us to try and face the world. It has beaten all that ever took heart to stand up against it. Surely there is something just and good in it, whatever we think or say, let it look ever so

unfair and press ever so hard. I write this as well as I can, but it is very hard to write. I cannot make way any further: my head and hand and eyes ache, and the sight of the words written down makes me feel sick; the letters seem to get in at my eyes and burn behind them. You must be good and bear with my letter.

With all our loves, I remain

Your affectionate sister,

A. C.

XXVII

REGINALD HAREWOOD TO MRS. RADWORTH

London, *Jan. 19th.*

I WILL wait for you till your own time; only, my dearest, I will not have you wait out of pity or fear. All that is done with: my time is here, with me; I have the day by the hand, and hold it by the hair. We have counted all and found nothing better than love. I do just hope there may be something for me to give up or go without: I see nothing yet. You are so far much better to me than all I ever knew of. I sit and make your face out between the words, and stop writing to look. You ought to have given me that broken little turquoise thing you used to have hung to your watch. I wonder all men who ever saw you do not come to get you away from me—fight me for you at least; for I shall never let you out of my hands when I have you well in them. If one had seen you and let you slip! I knew I should get you some day or die. Because I was never the least worth it. Because you need not have been so good, when

you were so beautiful that nothing you did could set you off. But you know I loved you ages first. When I was a boy, and got sight of you, I knew stupidly somehow you were the best thing there was. You were very perfect as a child; I know the clear look of your temples under the hair; and the fresh delicious tender girl's hair drawn off and made a crown with. I want to know what one was to have done without that? I don't think you cared about me a year ago—not the least, my love that is now. I had to play Palomydes to your Iseult a good bit; but are you ever going to be afraid of the old king in Cornwall after this? as if we were not any one's match, and anything we please.

> Je serai grand, et toi riche,
> Puisque nous nous aimerons.

You shall scent me out the music to that some day; the song made of the sound of flowers and colour of music: you ought to know the notes that go to the other version of it. We shall have such a love in our life that all the ends of it will be sweet. You will not care too much about the people that could be of no use to you. Could a brother save you when you wanted saving? Besides, I have hold of you. The whole world has no claim or right in it any

longer to set against mine. Let those come that want you, and see if I let go of you for any man. There will not be an inch of time, not a corner of our life, without some delicious thing in it. Let them tell us what we are to have instead if we give each other up. I shall get to be worth something to you in time. You say now you never found anything yet that had the likeness of your mate. I have much more of you than all the earth could deserve; I should like to see myself jealous of old fancies in a dead dream. That poor child at A. H. writes me piteous little letters, in the silliest helpless way, about the wrong of this and the right of that; she has been set upon and stung by some poisonous tale-bearing or other; she wants one to forbear loving for others' sake, and absolutely cites her own poor terrified little repentance after her husband's death, on remembering some unborn-baby-ghost of a flirtation which she never *told*—some innocuous preference which sticks to the childish little recollection like a sort of remorse. It is pitiable enough, but too laughable as well; for on the strength of it she falls at once to quoting vicious phrases and transcribing mere bat-like infamies and stupidities of the owl-eyed prurient sort, the base bitter talk of women without even such a soul as serves for salt to

the carrion of their mind. We know where such promptings start from. What is it to me, if I am to be the man fit to match with you by the right of my delight in you, that you have tried to find help or love before we came together, and failed of it? Let them show me letters to disprove that I love you, and I will read them. Till they do that I mean to hold to you, and make you hold to me. I thought there had been more in her than one sees; but she has a pliable, soft sort of mind, not unlike her over-tender, cased-up, exotic sort of beauty. I don't want women to carry the sign-mark of them all over, even to the hair. Hers always looks sensitive hair, and has changes of colour in it. A woman should keep to the deep sweet dark, with such a noble silence of colour in the depth of it—rich reserved hair, with a shadow and a sense of its own that wants no gilt setting of sunbeams to throw out the secret beauty in it. I should like to see yours painted; that would beat the best of them. Promise I shall have sight of it again soon. I want you as a beggar wants bread to eat; I have the sort of desire after your face that wounded men must have after water. I wish there were some mark of you carved on me that I might look at. Now this is come to me, I wonder all day long at all the world. Nobody else has this; but they live

in a sort of way. I do think, at times, that last year my poor little plaything of a sister and your brother were almost ready to believe they knew what it was—as you hear children say. They had the look and behaviour of a girl and boy playing themselves into belief in their play. And all the while we have drawn the lot and can turn the prize over, toss and catch it in our hands. All little loves are such poor food to keep alive on: our great desire and delight—infinite faith and truth and pleasure—will last our lives out without running short. You know who says there are only three things any lover has to say: Je t'aime; aime-moi; merci. I say the last over for ever when I fall to writing. I thank you always with all my heart and might, my darling, for being so perfect to me. We will go to France. There will be money. Write me word when you will. And I love you. We will have a good fight with the world if it comes in our way. Let us have the courage of our love, knowing it for the best thing there is. There is so little, after all has been thought of, either to brave or to resign. I shall make you wear your hair the way we like. Your sort of walk and motion and way of sitting has just made me think of the doves at Venice settling in the square, as we shall see them before summer. There is a head like you

in San Zanipolo; a portrait head in the right corner of a picture of the Virgin crowned: we shall see that. Only it has thick curled gold hair, like my sister's. You had that hair when you sat to Carpaccio; you have had time to grow perfecter in since. I can smell the sweetness of the sea when I think of our journey. I like signing my name, now it has to do with you. My name is a chattel of yours, and yours a treasure of mine. Let it be before spring; and love me as well as you can.

Reginald Edw. Harewood.

XXVIII

LADY MIDHURST TO MRS. RADWORTH

Ashton Hildred, *Jan. 30th.*

My Dear Clara:

I have not yet made up my mind whether or no you will be taken at unawares by the news I have to send you. You must make up yours to accept it with fortitude. Amy has just enriched the nation, and impoverished your brother, by the production of a child—male. In spite of her long depression and illness, it is a very sufficient infant, admirable in all their eyes here. Frank, I am sure, expected to hear of this in time. While there was any doubt as to the child's (I mean Amy's, and should say the mother's) state of health, we could not resolve on publishing the prospect of her confinement. I may all but say it was a game of counter-chances. That it has come to no bad end you will, I am sure, be as glad as we are. Eight months of mourning were enough to make one thoroughly anxious. The boy does us as much credit as anything so fat and fool-

ish, so red and ridiculous, as a new baby in good health can do. I suppose we shall be inundated with troubles because of this totally idiotic fragment of flesh and fluff, which my daughter has the front and face to assert resembles its father's family—such is the instant fruit of sudden promotion to grandmotherhood. And I am a great-grandmother; and not sixty-two till the month after next. Armande will never allow me my rank as junior again; yet I recollect her grown-up patronage of your father and me when we were barely past school age, and she barely out—la dame aux belles cousines I called her, and him le petit Jean de—what is it?—Saintré? I suppose my son-in-law will be guardian. I do hope nobody will feel upset at this—our dear Frank is too good a knight to grudge the baby its birth. Poor little soft animal, one could wish for all our sakes some of its belongings off the small shoulder of it; but as it has chosen to come, they must stick to it. Amy is in a noticeable flutter of impatience to get the christening of it well over; she has high views of the matter, picked up of late in some religious quarter. Edmund Reginald we mean to have it made into, and I must have Redgie Harewood to come and vow things for it—he will make an admirable surety for another boy's behaviour;

and the name will do very well to be washed under—unless, indeed, Frank would be chivalrous enough to halve the charge; then we might bracket his name with the poor father's. Don't ask him if you think he would rather keep off; we don't want felicitation, only forgiveness; that we must have. If I had not been tricked and caught in the springe of a sudden promise to take the weighty spiritual office on myself, I should implore you to be godmother. As it is, I suppose the sins and the sermons must all come under my care. Break the news as softly as you can; there must always be something abrupt, questionable, vexatious, in a business of the sort. It is hard to have to oust one's friends and shift one's point of view at a week's notice. However, here the child is, and we must set about the management of it. I shall make Frederick undertake the main work at once as guardian and grandfather. He writes to Lidcombe by this post. Amy is already better than she has been for months, and very little pulled down, in spite of a complete surprise. She makes a delicious double to her baby, lying in a tumbled tortuous nest or net of hair with golden linings, with tired relieved eyes and a face that flashes and subsides every five minutes with a weary pleasure—she glitters and undulates at every sight of the child

as if it were the sun and she water in the light of it. You see how lyrical one may become at an age when one's grandchildren have babies. I should have thought her the kind of woman to cry a fair amount of tears at such a time, but happily she refrains from that ceremonial diversion. She is the image of that quivering rest which follows on long impassive trouble, and the labour of days without deeds—quiet, full of life, eager and at ease. I imagine she has no memory or feeling left her from the days that were before yesterday. She and the baby were born at one birth, and know each as much as the other of the people and things that went on before that.

Get your husband to take a human view of the matter—I suppose his ideas of a baby which is neither zoophyte nor fossil are rather of the vaporous and twilight order of thought—and bring him down for the christianizing part of the show, if he will condescend so far. He could take a note or two on the process of animal development by stages, and the decidedly misty origin of that comic species to which our fat present sample of fleshly goods may belong.

About Reginald: I may as well now say, once for all, that I think I can promise to relieve you for good of any annoyance in that quarter. We

must both of us by this time be really glad of any excuse to knock his folly about you on the head. Here is my plan of action, to be played out if necessary; if you have a better, please let me know of it in time, before I shuffle and deal; you see I show you my hand in the most perfectly frank way. That dear good Armande, who really has an exquisite comprehension of us all and our small difficulties, has got (Heaven I *hope* knows how, but I need hardly say I don't) a set of old letters out of the hands of the *sémillant* and seductive M. de Saverny *fils*, and put them into mine, where you cannot doubt they are in much better keeping. Octave is not exactly the typical braggart, but there is a dash in him of that fearful man in *Madame Bovary*—the first lover, I mean; varnished of course, and well kept down, but the little grain of that base nature does leaven and flavour the whole man. He will never have, never so much as understand, the splendid courtesy and noble reticence of a past age. His father had twice his pretensions and less than half his pretension; and so it will be with all the race. Knowing as you do now that the papers exist, you must feel reasonably glad to be well out of his hands. Not, of course, my dear niece, that I could for one second conceive you have what people would call any reason to be glad

of such a thing, or that I would, in the remotest way, insinuate that there was even so much as seeming indiscretion on one side. But when you permitted Octave to open up on that tack, you were not old or stupid enough to see, what duller eyes could hardly have missed of, the use your innocence might be put to — a thing, to me, touching and terrible to think of. Cleverness, like goodness, makes the young less quick to apprehend wrong or anticipate misconstruction than stupid old people are. In this case my heavy-headed experience might have been a match for your rapid bright sense. I have hardly looked at your correspondence; had not other eyes been there before mine, nothing, of course, could induce me to look now; but I know Madame de Rochelaurier well enough to be sure she has not skipped a word. I must look over my hand, you see, as it is. It was hard enough to get them from her at all, as you may imagine; I hardly know myself how I did get it done; mais on a ses moyens. What I have seen, in the meantime, is quite enough to show me that one of these letters would fall like a flake of thawed ice on the most feverish of a boy's rhapsodies. With the least of these small ink-and-paper pills, I will undertake to clear your suitor's head at once, and bring him to a sane and sound view of actual things. I know what boys want. They

will bear with any imaginable antecedent except one which makes their own grand passion look like a pale late proof taken off at a second or third impression. All the proofs before letters you left in Octave's hands long ago—your sentiment (excuse, but this *is* the way he will take it) has come down now to the common print. Show him what the old friend really was to you, and he will congeal at once. I don't imagine you ever meant actually to let him thaw and distil into a tender dew of fine feeling at your feet; you would no doubt always have checked him in time—if he would always have let you. But then, upon the whole, it is as well to have a weapon at hand. I believe he has grown all but frantic of late, and has wild notions of the future—amusing to you no doubt while they last, but not good to allow of. Now, I should not like to lay the Saverny letters before him, and refrigerate his ideas by that process; one had rather dispense with it while one can; but sooner than let his derangement grow to confirmed mania and become the practical ruin of him, I must use my medicines. I know, after he had taken them, he would be sensible again, and give up his dream of laws broken and lives united. Still, I had rather suppress and swamp altogether the Saverny-Rochelaurier episode, and all that hangs on to it—rather escape being

mixed up in the matter at all, if I can. There is a better way, supposing you like to take it. Something you will see must be done; suppose you do this. Write a quiet word to Reginald, in a way to put an end to all this folly for good. Say he must leave off writing; we know (thanks to your own excellent feeling and sense) that he does write. Lay it on your husband, if you like—but make it credible. Leave no room for appeal. Put it in this way, suppose, as you could do far better than I can for you. That an intimacy cannot last which cannot exist without exciting unpleasant, unfriendly remark. That you have no right, no reason, and no wish to be offered up in the Iphigenia manner for the sake of arousing the adverse winds of rumour and scandal to the amusement of a matronly public. That you are sorry to *désillusionner* even "a fool of his folly," and regret any vexation you may give, but do not admit (I would just intimate this much, as I am sure you can so well afford to do) that he ever had reason for his unreason. That, in a word, for your sake and his and other people's, you must pass for the present from intimates into strangers, and may hope, if both please, to lapse again in course of time from strangers into friends. I think this will do for the ground-plan—add any intimation or decoration you like, I for one will

never find or indicate a fault. Only be unanswerable, leave no chance of room for resistance or reply, shut him up, as you say, at once on any plea, and I will accept your point of action and act after it—he need never, and never shall, be made wiser on the subject than you please. The old letters shall never have another chance of air or light. If you don't like writing to silence him, I can but use them faute de mieux — for, of course, the boy *must* be brought up short; but I think my way is the better and more graceful. Do not you?

It is a pity that in putting a stop to folly we must make an end of pleasant intercourse and the friendly daily habits of intimate acquaintance. I can quite imagine and appreciate the sort of regret with which one resigns oneself to any such rupture. For my part it is simply the canon of our Church about men's grandmothers which keeps me safe on Platonic terms with our friend. Some day I shall console and revenge myself by writing a novel fit to beat M. Feydeau out of the field on that tender topic. Figure to yourself the exquisite effects that might so well be made. The grandmother might at last see my hero's ardour cooling after a bright brief interval of birdlike pleasure and butterfly love—volupté suprême et touchante où les rides se fondent sous les baisers et les lois

s'effacent sous les larmes—all that style; and when compelled to unclasp her too tender arms from the neck of her jeune premier, the venerable lady might sadly and resignedly pass him on, shall we suppose to his aunt? A pathetic intrigue might be worked out, by which she would (without loving him) seduce her son-in-law so as to leave the coast clear for the grandson who had forsaken her, and with a heart wrung to the core by self-devoted love prepare her daughter's mind to accept a nephew's homage: finally see the young people made happy in each other and an assenting uncle, and take arsenic, or, at sight of her work completed, die of a cerebral congestion (one could make more *surgery* out of that), invoking on the heads of child and grandchild a supreme benediction, baptized in the sacred tears which drop on the grave of her own love. Upon my word I think it an idea which might bear splendid fruit in the hands of a great realistic novelist. I see my natural profession now, but I fear too late.

In good earnest I am sorry this must be the end. A year ago I was too glad to enlist your kindness on Reginald's behalf; and I can see how that kindness led you in time to put up with his folly. I am sure I can but feel the more tenderly and thankfully towards you if indeed

you have ever come to regret for a moment that things were as they are. I have no right to reproach, and no heart: no one has the right; no one should have the heart. You know my lifelong abhorrence of the rampant Briton, female or male; and my perfect disbelief in the peculiar virtue of the English hearth and home. There is no safeguard against the natural sense of liking. But the time to count up and pay down comes for us all; we have no pleasures of our own; we hold no comforts but on sufferance. Things are constant only to division and decline. The quiet end of a friendship I have at times thought sadder than the stormiest end of a love-match. *Chi sa?* But I do know which I had rather keep by me while I can. It is a pity you two poor children are not to be given more play, or to see much more of each other. He will miss his friend, her sense and grace and wit, the exquisite companionship of her, when he has done with the fooleries of sentiment. You, I must rather hope for his sake, may miss the sight of him for a time, the ardent ways and eager faiths and fancies, all the freshness and colour and fervour of his time and temperament; perhaps even a little the face and eyes and hair; ce sont là des choses qui ne gâtent jamais rien; we never know *when* we begin or cease to care for such things. I too have had everything hand-

some about me, and I have had losses. You see, my dear, the flowers (and weeds) will grow over all this in good time. One thing and one time we may be quite sure of seeing—the day when we shall have well forgotten everything. It is not uncomfortable, as one gets old, to recollect that we shall not always remember. The years will do without us; and we are not fit to keep the counsel of the Fates. In good time we shall be out of the way of things, and have nothing in all the world to desire or deplore. When recollection makes us sorry, we can remember that we shall forget. I never did much harm, or good perhaps, in my life; so at least I think and hope; but I should be sorry to suppose I had to live for ever in sight of the memory of it. Few could rationally like to face that likelihood if they once realized it. There is no fear; for a time is sure to come which will have to take no care of the best of us, as our time has to take none of plenty who were better. I showed you, now some eighteen months since, when it first appeared, I think, that most charming song of "Love and Age," the one bit of verse that I have liked well enough for years to dream even of crying over; the sweetest, noblest piece of simple sense and manly music, to my poor thinking, that this age of turbulent metrical machinery has ever turned out; and it, by-the-by, hardly

belongs to you. Your people have not the secret of such clear pure language, such plain pellucid words and justice of feeling. Since my first reading of it, the cadences that open and close it come back perpetually into my ears like the wash of water on shingle up and down, when I think of times gone or coming. I never coveted a verse till I read that in "Gryll Grange"; there is in it such an exquisite absence of the wrong thing and presence of the right thing throughout—just enough words for the thought and just enough thought for the matter; a wise, sweet, strong piece of work. We shall leave the years to come nothing much better than that. What is said there about love and time and all the rest of it is the essence, incomparably well distilled, of all that we can reasonably want or mean to say. We must let things pass; when their time is come for going, or when if they stay they can but turn to poison, we must help them to be gone. And then we had best forget.

It is a dull, empty end; a blank upshot; but you know what good authority we have for saying there are no such things as catastrophes. I admit it is rather a case of girl's head and fish's tail; but you must see how deep and acute that eye of Balzac's was for such things. His broad maxims are the firmest-footed and least likely to slip of any great thinker's I know;

they have such tough root and tight hold on facts. As to our year's work and wages, we may all say truly enough, Le dénoûment c'est qu'il n'y a pas de dénoûment. I prophesied that last year, when there first seemed to be a likelihood of some domestic romance getting under way. The point of such things, as I told Amy, is just that they come to nothing. There were very pretty scandalous materials; the making of an excellent roman de mœurs—intime et tant soit peu scabreux. Amy and your brother, you doubtless remember, gave symptoms of being touched, as flirting warmed to feeling; they had begun playing the game of cousins with an over-liberal allowance of sentiment. Redgie again was mad to upset conventions and vindicate his right of worshipping you; had no idea, for his part, of keeping on the sunny side of elopement. Joli ménage! one might have said at first sight—knowing this much, and *not* knowing what Englishwomen are here well known to be. And here we are at the last chapter with no harm done as yet. You end as model wife, she as model mother; you wind up your part with a suitor to dismiss, she hers with a baby to bring up. All is just as it was, as far as we all go; the one difference, lamentable enough as it is, between this and last year is the simple doing of chance,

and quite outside of any doing of ours. But for poor Edmund's accidental death, which I am fatalist enough to presume must have happened anyhow, we should all be just where we were. Not an event in the whole course of things; not, I think, so much as an incident; very meagre stuff for a French workman to be satisfied with. We must be content never to make a story, and may instead reflect with pride what a far better thing it is to live in the light of English feeling and under the rule of English habit.

You will give Frank my best love and excuses in the name of us all. He must write to me before too long. For yourself accept this as I mean it; act as you like or think wise, and believe me at all times

Your most affectionate aunt,

HELENA MIDHURST.

XXIX

FRANCIS CHEYNE TO LADY MIDHURST

Lidcombe, *Feb. 15th.*

MY DEAR AUNT HELENA:

I SHALL be clear of this place to-morrow; I am going for a fortnight or so to Blocksham. I quite agree it will be best for me not to have the pleasure of seeing Amicia. You will, I hope, tell her how thoroughly and truly glad I am; and that if I could have known earlier how things were to turn out it would have simply saved me some unpleasant time. As to meeting, when it can be pleasant to her, I shall be very grateful for leave to come—and till then it is quite good enough to hear of her doing well again. Only one thing could add to my perfectly sincere pleasure at this change —to know I had been able to bring it about by my own will and deed; as I would have done long since. I hope she will get all right again, and the sooner for being back here. I shall not pretend to suppose you don't know now that I care more about her and what happens

to her than about most things in the world. If all goes well with her nothing will go far wrong with me while I live. I dare say I shall do well enough for the professions yet, when I fall to and try a turn with them; and I cannot say, honestly, how thankful I am to be well rid of a name and place that I never could have been glad of.

We have more to thank you for than your kindness as to this. I have seen my sister since you wrote, and she has shown me some part of your letter. I do not think we shall have any more trouble at home. My brother-in-law knows nothing of it. She has written I believe to Reginald; I must say she was angry enough, but insists on no notice. If she were ever to find home all but too comfortless to put up with, I could not well wonder; she has little there to look to or lean upon. We are out of the fighting times, but if M. de Saverny or any other man living were to try and make base use of her kindness and innocence, I suppose no one could well blame or laugh at me if I exacted atonement from him. As it is, I declare if he comes in her way, and I find he has not kept entire silence as to the letters written when she was too young and too good to dream what baseness and stupidity there is among people, I will prevent him from going

about and holding up his head again as a man of honour. Any one from this time forth who gives her any trouble by writing or by word of mouth shall at once answer to me for it. I have no right to say that I believe or do not believe she has never felt a regret or a wish. She is answerable to no man for that. I do say she has given nobody reason to think of her, or a right to speak of her, except with all honour — and if necessary I wish people to know I intend to stand by what I say.

She is quite content, and I believe determined, to see no more of R. H. for some time; quite ready too to allow that accident and a time of trouble let him perhaps too much into the secret of an uncongenial household life, and that she was over ready to look for companionship where it was hardly wise to look for it. Few men (as she says) at his age could have had the sense or chivalrous feeling to understand all and presume upon nothing. She said it simply, but in a way to make any one ashamed of mistaking for an instant such a quiet noble nature as she has. I have only now to thank you for helping us both to get quit of the matter without trouble or dispute. I should be ashamed to thank you for doing my sister the simple justice not to misconstrue her share in it. If there ever was any evil-speaking, I hope

and suppose it is now broken up for good. For the rest, I have agreed to leave it at present in your hands and hers—but if ever she wants help or defence, I shall, of course, be on the outlook to give it. I have only to add messages from us both, and remain, my dear aunt,

Your affectionate nephew,

FR. CHEYNE.

XXX

LADY MIDHURST TO LADY CHEYNE

Lidcombe, *Feb. 25th.*

My Dear Child:

First salute the fellow-baby in my name, and then you shall have news. I assume that is done, and will begin. Two days here with your father have put me up to the work there is to do. I shall not take you into council as to estate affairs, madame la baronne. When the heir is come to ripe boyhood you may take things in hand for yourself. Meantime we shall keep you both in tutelage, and grow fat on privy peculation; so that if you find no holes in the big Lidcombe cheese when you cut it, it will not be the fault of our teeth. So much for you and your bald imp; but you want news, I suppose, of friends. I called at Blocksham, and saw the Radworths in the flesh—that is, in the bones and cosmetics; for the male is gone to bone, and the female to paint. The poor man calls aloud for an embalmer: the poor woman cries pitifully for an enameller. They

get on well enough again by this time, I believe. To use her own style, she is *dead beat*, and quite safe; viciously resigned. I think we may look for peace. She would have me racked if she could, no doubt, but received me smiling from the tips of her teeth outwards, and with a soft dry pressure of the fingers. Not a hint of anything kept back. Evidently, too, she holds her brother well in leash. Frank pleased me: he was courteous, quiet, without any sort of affectation, dissembled or displayed. I gave him sufficient accounts, and he was grateful; could not have taken the position and played a rather hard part more gracefully than he did. We said little, and came away with all good speed. The house is a grievous sort of place now, and likely to stay so. I have no doubt she will set all her wits to work and punish him for her failure. She will hardly get up a serious affair again, or it might be a charity to throw her some small animal by way of lighter food. It would not surprise me if she fell to philanthropic labour, or took some devotional drug by way of stimulant. The *bureau d'amourettes* is a bankrupt concern, you see: her sensation-shop is closed for good. I prophesy she will turn a decent worrying wife of the simpler Anglican breed; home-keeping, sharp-edged, earnestly petty and drily energetic.

Negro-worship now, or foreign missions, will be about her mark; perhaps too a dash and sprinkle of religious feeling, with the chill just off; with a mild pinch of the old Platonic mixture now and then to flavour and leaven her dead lump of life: I can imagine her stages well enough for the next dozen or score of years. Pity she had not more stock in hand to start with.

I have been at Plessey too; one could not be content with seeing half a result. Captain H. was more gracious to me than you would believe. I suspect the man has wit enough to see that but for my poor offices his boy would be now off Heaven knows whither, and stuck up to the ears in such a mess as nothing could ever have scraped him thoroughly clean of. He and Redgie are at last on the terms of an armed peace—very explosive terms, you know; but decent while they last, and preferable to a tooth-and-nail system. I will say I behaved admirably to him; asked what plans he had for our boy—what he thought the right way to take with him—assented and consented, and suggested and submitted; altogether, made myself a model. It is a fact that at this day he thinks Redgie might yet be, in time, bent and twisted and melted down into the Church mould of man—cut close to the fit of a sur-

plice. Now I truly respect and enjoy a finished sample of clergy; no trade makes better company; I have known them a sort of cross between artist and diplomate which is charming. Then they have always about them a suppressed sense of something behind—some hint of professional reserve which does not really change them, but does colour them; something which fails of being a check on their style, but is exquisitely serviceable as a sauce to it. A cleric who is also a man of this world, and has nothing of the cross-bone type, is as perfect company as you can get or want. But conceive Redgie at any imaginably remote date coming up recast in that state out of the crucible of time! I kept a bland face though, and hardly sighed a soft semi-dissent. At least, I said we might turn him to something good yet; that I did hope and think. The fatherly nerve was touched; he warmed to me expressively. I am sure now the poor man thought he had been too hard on me all these years in his private mind, put bitter constructions on very innocent conduct of mine—had something, after all, to atone for on his side. He grew quite softly confidential and responsive before our talk was out. Ah, my dear, if you could see what odd, tumbled, shapeless recollections it brought up, to find myself friendly with him and

exchanging wishes and hopes of mine against his, in all sympathy and reliance! I have not earned a stranger sensation for years. Ages ago, before any of your set were born,—before he married your mother: when he was quite young, poor, excitable, stupid, and pleasant—infinite ages ago, when the country and I were in our thirties and he in his twenties, we used to talk in that way. I felt ready to turn and look round for things I had missed since I was six years old. I should hardly have been taken aback if my brothers had come in and we had set to playing together like babies. To be face to face with such a dead and buried bit of life as that was so quaint that stranger things even would have fallen flat after it. However, there was no hoisting of sentimental colours on either side: though I suppose no story ever had a stranger end to it than ours. To this day I don't know why I made him or let him marry your mother.

I told him I must see Redgie and take him in hand by private word of mouth. He was quite nice about it, and left the boy to me, smiling even as he turned us over to each other; more benign than he ever was when I came over to see Redgie in his school-days: a time that seemed farther off now than the years before his birth. I can't tell you how odd it was

to be thrown back into '52 without warning—worse than the proverbial middle of next week. I will say for Redgie he was duly ashamed, and never looked sillier in his boyish time than when I took him to task. Clara, I told him, had, as far as I knew, behaved excellently; but I wanted to have facts. Dismissal was legible on him all over; but the how I was bent on making out. So in time I got to some fair guess at the manner of her final stroke. It was sharp and direct. She wrote not exactly after my dictation (which I never thought she need do, or would), but simply in the resolute sacrificial style. She forbade him to answer; refused to read him, or reply if she read; would never see him till all had blown over for good. It seems she could not well deny that not long since he might have carried her off her feet—which feet she had now happily regained. Heaven knows, my dear child, what she could or could not deny if she chose: I confess I cannot yet make up my mind whether or no she ever had an idea of decamping, and divorcing with *all* ties; it is not like her; but who can be sure? She has none now. Honestly, I do suspect that a personal bias of liking did *at times* get mixed up with her sentimental spirit of intrigue; and that she would have done things for Redgie which a fellow ten years

older or a thought less handsome would never have made her think of: in effect, that she was in love with him. She is quite capable of being upset by simple beauty: if ever she were to have a real lover now, I believe he would be a fool and very nice-featured. It is the supreme Platonic retribution — the Nemesis of sentimental talent, which always clutches such runners as she is before they turn the post. There was a small grain of not dubious pathos in her letter: she was fond enough of him to regret what she did not quite care to fight for. What she told him I don't know, nor how she put it: I can guess, though. She has done for his first love, at any rate. He knows he was a fool, and I did not press for his opinion of her. One may suppose she put him upon honour, and made the best of herself. I should guess, too, that she gave hints of what he might do in the way of annoyance if he were not ready to forgive and make friends at a distance. That you see would prick him on the chivalrous side, and he would obey and hold his tongue and hand at once—as he has done. Anyhow, the thing is well killed and put under ground, with no fear of grave-stealers; there is not even bone enough left of it to serve the purpose of a moral dissection. The chief mourner (if he did but know it) should be Ernest Radworth.

I could cry over that wretchedest of husbands and students when I think of the thorns in his pillow, halters in his pew, and ratsbane in his porridge, which a constant wife will now have to spend her time in getting ready.

Redgie was very fair about her; would have no abuse and no explanation. "You see," he said, "she tells me what she chooses to tell, and that one is bound to take; but I have no sort of business now to begin peeping and snuffing at anything beyond. I thought once, you know, we both had a right to ask or answer; that was when she seemed to care about it. One can't be such a blackguard as to try and take it out of her for changing her mind. She was quite right to think twice and do as she chose; and the best I can do now is to keep off and not get in her way." Of course the boy talks as if the old tender terms between them had been broken off for centuries, and their eyes were now meeting across a bottomless pit of change. I shall not say another word on the matter: all is as straight and right as it need be, though I *know* that only last month he was writing her the most insane letters. These, one may hope, she will think fit to burn. To him I believe she had the sense never to write at any length or to any purpose but twice, this last time being one. And so our little bit

of comedy slips off the stage without noise, and the curtain laps down over it. Lucky it never turned to the tearful style, as it once threatened to do.

I need not say that Redgie does not expect to love seriously again. Not that he says it; he has just enough sense of humour to keep the assertion down; but evidently he thinks it. Some one has put a notion into the Captain's head about Philomène de Rochelaurier—Clara herself, perhaps, for aught I know; she is quite ingenious enough to have tried that touch while the real play was still in rehearsal. Nothing will come of that, though; I shall simply reconquer the boy, and hold him in hand till I find a woman fit to have charge of him. I hope he will turn to some good, seriously. Some of his friends are not bad friends for him; I like that young Audley well enough, and he seems to believe in Redgie at a quite irrational rate. Perhaps I do too. He must take his way, or make it; and we shall see.

As to the marriage matter, I have thought lately that Armande might be given her own way and Frank married to the girl—if they are all of one mind about it. It sounds rather Louis Quinze to *bâcler* a match in this fashion, but I don't see why it should not come to good. He may as well marry now as later. I don't at

all know what he will make in the professional line; and he can hardly throw over all thoughts of it. I did think of proposing he should be at the head of the estates for a time, in the capacity of chief manager and overlooker; but there were rubs in the way of that plan. It is a nice post, and might be made a nice sinecure—or demicure, with efficient business people under and about one; not bad work for a *cadet de famille*, and has been taken on like terms before now. We owe him something; however, we may look for time to pay it. I will confess to you that if the child had been a girl I meant to have brought you together at some future day. You must forgive me; for the heir's marrying the dowager would have made our friends open their eyes and lips a little; and things are much better as they are.

THE END

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